

Mobile Ethnicity

The Formation of the Korean Chinese Transnational Migrant Class

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation, *Mobile Ethnicity*, examines the formation of a transnational ethnic working class and the dynamics of remittance development in the context of Korean Chinese labor migration between China and Korea. I conducted multi-sited field research for over two years, mainly in Seoul, South Korea, and the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture of Yanbian, China, the ethnic zone bordering North Korea. My ethnography is built on a local saying: “Everybody is gone with the Korean Wind.” The Korean Wind is the popular name for the massive Korean Chinese transnational labor migration to South Korea that occurred mostly during the 1990s and 2000s, at the intersection of post-Cold War and post-socialist cultures. I especially highlight the Korean Wind as a unique product of China’s economic reform and open economy (*gaigekaiifang*), which has affected not only Korean Chinese but also Han Chinese in Yanbian and elsewhere in the region.

Through the lenses of kinship, development, money, love, bodies, and time, I analyze the new affect and materiality, new forms of belonging and dwelling, and new hopes and frustrations of *mobile ethnicity*. On the one hand, I trace the reconstituted subjectivity of Korean Chinese as a particular ethnic working class in a transnational setting. On the other hand, I map the re-characterized ethnic space of Yanbian as a borderland traversed by a myriad of different agents. Caught between the “Korean dream” and the “Chinese dream,” Korean Chinese have chosen transnational mobility as a way of dealing with the contingencies of neoliberalism and globalization. But their way of working for a better future has created unexpected vulnerabilities, sealing them into a circuit of migration as a transnational ethnic working class.

This ethnography illuminates the ripple effects of the Korean Wind with a focus on remittances, as Korean Chinese have discovered, promoted, and deployed their ethnic currency

in the transnational labor market. On a macro level, remittances play a critical role in relocating populations (both pulling them into spaces and pulling them out), and create an intersection of internal migration and transnational migration, thereby reshaping the ethnic relationships and spatial characteristics of the region. I emphasize the vulnerable characteristics of a remittance-dependent economy, which fluctuates in response to exchange rates and global economic forces. On a personal level, remittances are not only gifts or realizations of familial duty, but also an unstable form of currency requiring careful management and submission to a peculiar temporality of long waits and unknown futures. The life built upon the contingent flow of remittances has created and been impacted by the transnational temporality, constantly moving back and forth between the sharply split worlds; working and resting, making money and spending money, Korea and Yanbian. Rigid visa regulations by the Korean government especially force migrant workers into a “split life,” as they must weave two different worlds into a common everyday life, and discipline their bodies to switch easily between two different modes of time.

This study examines “Yanbian Socialism” that has responded to and intersected with the Korean Wind, a particular socialism that stresses overt expressions of the Korean Chinese political faith in China while acknowledging the prefecture’s cultural and economic links to Korea. My dissertation aims to weave together an account of the particular structure of feeling experienced by Korean Chinese as they are caught between confusion and hesitation, contention and contradiction, economic desperation and political caution. I view their constant adjustments and revisions as a major influence on the formation of mobile ethnicity. My work thus provides a new understanding of the politics of class and gender among Chinese ethnic minorities, articulated through transnational mobility at the intersection of post-Cold War, post-socialist, and neoliberal currents across and beyond East Asia.

For My Parents

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PROLOGUE

Church like a *Camp*: Being Vulnerable in Seoul

In July 2004, I first visited Uijuro Church in Hongjedong, a neighborhood in northern Seoul, in order to meet a minister named Lim Gwangbin, a leader in the pro-democracy movement of the 1980s. Since the military government officially came to an end and democratization started in 1993, however, Minister Lim's focus shifted toward issues of social equality. I had not met Minister Lim in person until that day, but had heard about him from NGO activists and media reports as one of the leaders of the social justice movement. He had recently led a year-long series of demonstrations to demand the legalization of undocumented Korean Chinese workers and reform of the Overseas Korean Act. I expected to learn from him more about the stories, progress, and future of the social movement on behalf of Korean Chinese. My formal experience as a volunteer activist working for KIN (Korean International Network, a non-governmental organization that advocates for the human rights of overseas Koreans) gave me access to Minister Lim and members of his church and helped me quickly develop close ties to them.

During the summer, I went to the church every weekday, and attended Sunday services. Most of the time, I helped Minister Lim to counsel Korean Chinese workers regarding legal issues such as unpaid wages, industrial accidents and related insurance compensation, marriage to and divorce from Koreans (mostly Korean men). But the myriad problems mostly derived from their long undocumented status. Minister Lim wanted me to document the consultations to build an archive as a reference for the church, the public, and my research. The interviews I handled helped me grasp the circumstance in which the undocumented Korean Chinese workers had been situated. Many of the testimonies were impossible to listen to without shedding tears. But

the stories were enlightening, teaching me about the conflict and suffering that these workers went through on a daily basis in what was supposed to be their putative ethnic “home” country.

Uijuro church was in some respects an ordinary church offering services on Sundays and Wednesdays for Koreans as well as Korean Chinese.¹ But it was also used as a living space for dozens of Korean Chinese during the week. I felt, when I first entered the church, as if it were a camp where the fifty or sixty undocumented Korean Chinese staying there shared the space together but could not freely go out to work, living the “bare life” (Agamben 1998),² exposed to the threat of deportation back to China. They were stuck in the church, avoiding possible arrest while vaguely waiting for good things to happen to them, particularly a change of policy by the Korean government to initiate more favorable treatment of Korean Chinese as ethnic Koreans. My research started with and has been built upon the heightened anxiety and tension among these Korean Chinese that I first witnessed at the church. Since the summer of 2004, I have developed, expanded, and situated my research in a transnational setting, tracing the migration trajectory of Korean Chinese back and forth between China and Korea as they have taken shape as a *mobile ethnicity* in conjunction with the fluctuating economic and political circumstances of the last two decades.

¹ The role of Korean churches in raising a voice on behalf of undocumented Korean Chinese workers should not be overlooked. Ministers from the 1980s democracy movement, such as Minister Lim, turned their attention to human rights, and have emerged as central figures dealing with the concerns of Korean Chinese and other immigrant workers pouring into Korea (formerly a labor-exporting country). The ministers established centers and organizations for immigrant workers that offered legal services, emotional community, and shelter, while encouraging the workers to attend Sunday services. Christianity goes hand in hand with human rights in Korea, as churches press the government to change policies that work against the human rights of immigrants. Most Korean Chinese are not Christian, yet they assume that churches are the places for them to get help settling in an unfamiliar country. I became familiar with several Korean Chinese churches in and around Seoul. Whether they were believers or not, hundreds of Korean Chinese regularly attended church on Sunday. In this context, Minister Lim is only one of many ministers doing such work. But he was distinctive in the sense that he had led the year-long demonstrations in close collaboration with the Korean Chinese Association, a community that was formed and maintained by Korean Chinese workers themselves with his support.

² Giorgio Agamben writes, “bare life remains included in politics in the form of the exception, that is, as something that is included solely through an exclusion”(Agamben 1998:11). Bare life is included in politics through exclusion, and yet excluded if there is no exception under the liminal condition of exclusive inclusion and inclusive exclusion.

*

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Minister Lim and a hundred members of *the Korean Chinese Association* had fought together to press the Korean government to revise the Overseas Korean Act, sticking together through a live-in-demonstration for three months—from November 2003 to February 2004—in a place called the One Hundred Years Memorial Building of Korean Christian, located in the central part of Seoul. In the end the Korean government admitted that the Act was flawed and accepted the need for revision—although at that point it was unclear when change would actually take place. But, overall, it was accepted as a great victory that Minister Lim and the members of the Association achieved together. Whenever I visited the church in July 2004, I often heard recollections of their demonstration experiences from the members. “It’s hard to express in words how much we suffered for those three month of cold winter,” one former demonstrator told me. “We slept on the cold concrete floor, shared the room with dozens of other Korean Chinese, and ate only small amounts of distributed food, and rarely got to take a shower.” During the demonstration, some members got sick. Some left for work. Some returned to China, or got deported there. One person died in an accident. Most of them expressed how tired they were during the demonstration, and how frustrated they were afterwards. Since their legal status remained undocumented even after the demonstration, they still faced the risk of arrest and deportation. The Korean Chinese members of the Association moved to the church together in order to find a community and safety net just in case they were caught by police. The members treated the church as if it were a camp, a space of exception—“a hybrid of law and fact in which the two terms have become indistinguishable” as Agamben notes in *Homo Sacer* (Agamben 1998). During this liminal and uncertain period, the undocumented members were included but excluded in Korea. Inside the church, they felt safe without worrying about deportation, whereas

they were still vulnerable to arrest once they were outside. In effect, the church was treated as a zone in which the law was suspended. Until the reforms took effect and the Korean government clearly announced how to handle the problem of a half million undocumented Korean Chinese, the church continued to function as a space of exception.

The church was also a voluntary community for these sixty people, with a division of labor, and special roles for each person: cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, boiling water, and so on. The members were given nicknames according to their task: “Ms. Cook” and “Mr. Boiling Water,” for example. Interestingly, since most of them entered Korea under pseudonyms they had adopted on falsified visas and passports, some Korean Chinese used two names—real and assumed—whereas others just used their fake names, which had come to sound more familiar to them than their real names. The church as a space of exception had to be reorganized to accommodate them. The main hall of the church was remodeled as a large dormitory. With separate spaces for female and male, dozens of Korean Chinese shared the hall as a sleeping place, unfolding their own blankets on the floor at night. During daytime, the hall served as a communal space where the members of the Association shared their anxious stories and sighed about the uncertain future. They were strangers to each other, but at the same time, they were friends in the same boat, undocumented and suffering from the fear of arrest. Only when money began to run out did some people secretly go out to work. But the irregular working schedules they had to adopt did not assuage their anxiety, since the income was irregular, too. The psychological pressure made some of the residents physically sick. But they could not afford to visit doctors, either. The anxiety took its toll on the little community. The members thought of themselves as friends and comrades, and even addressed each other in kinship terms. But sometimes they argued and quibbled, often about not very serious issues. The community

gradually dwindled as more and more had to leave to find jobs, regardless of the risk of deportation, but it endured until amnesty was instituted in 2005, when the remaining members finally scattered. Since then, I have kept in contact with some of them, and continued to follow their routes from Seoul to Yanbian and back. Their travelling stories are imprinted in this dissertation

INTRODUCTION

I am a windflower floating without direction. I have been moving back and forth, not staying between where the wind is coming from and where the wind is going. I have flown here and there, continuously remembering and forgetting, blaming and missing the other world. I belong to both worlds, while, at the same time, I escape from both worlds. Who am I, the one who has flown all around? I am the wind....

Huh Ryunsoon, *The Windflower*

One day in April 2009, I chanced to eavesdrop on a conversation between two women sitting next to me in a small, crowded bus from Yanji to Longjing, two cities in Yanbian, the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture in Northeast China on the border with North Korea. The two women had seemingly gone a long time without seeing each other and were busy catching up, comparing notes on what they had done and where they had gone over the past couple of years. One part of their lively conversation especially caught my attention, as it reflected the complex trajectory of contemporary Korean Chinese culture in the context of economic reform in Yanbian and China at large.

A: Where have you been? I haven't seen you for years! I heard that you went to Russia after stopping your work in North Korea (*Bukchosun*). When did you come back?

B: I came back from Russia a long time ago. After that, I went to Korea [South Korea, *Hankuk*]¹ again. I've spent eight years working in Korea.

A: Ah, really? Then you must have made a lot of money if you went both to Russia and to Korea. Before that you went to North Korea, too, right?

B: What money (indicating she has not made much money)? I just got old and full of diseases. I wasn't sure if I could keep on doing drudgery work in Korea any longer. I was thinking of staying in China permanently. But there's nothing to do here! So now I'm waiting to go back to Korea again. As long as I work, I can make money there.

¹ One legacy of the Cold War in the Korean peninsula is the confusing usage of terms for "Korea." The official name of North Korea in English is Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). But in Korean, the name is Chosun People's Democratic Republic. Given that Chosun was not only the name of the last dynasty prior to the founding of modern Korea, but also a common ethnic name for Koreans, Chosun is a word widely used in China to indicate things related to North and South Korea. Korean Chinese commonly call North Korea *North Chosun* (*Bukchosun* in Korean), while referring to South Korea simply as Korea (*Hankuk* in Korean). North Koreans use the term Chosun for the Korean peninsula, and call the two countries North Chosun and South Chosun. The terms North Korea and South Korea are from the point of view of South Korea.

A: You're a lucky one. I've never been to Russia, let alone Korea, even though *everybody* has gone there. Do you know what happened to Chunhua?

B: She's in Korea, too.

A: She is? Everybody's gone with the Korean Wind [*Hankuk Baram*]. But I don't know if the day will ever come that *I* go to Korea.

This dissertation tells the story behind a common Korean Chinese saying: “*Everybody who can walk [any able body] is gone with the Korean Wind.*” There is talk about the Korean Wind “whenever even two people get together,” as Yanbian people put it. The saying encapsulates belonging and dwelling, affect and materiality, uncertainty and futurity, all in the context of the collective and obsessive outflow of Korean Chinese to South Korea in the wake of the “opening” of China in the last two decades. Korean Chinese are descended from Koreans who moved to China during the colonial period or even before. They lived during the Cold War era as a Chinese ethnic minority forbidden from having connections to South Korea. My dissertation asks: what established the great Korean Chinese transnational ethnic labor migration of the 1990s and 2000s, or, as Korean Chinese term it, the Korean Wind? What can this transnational migration tell us about how ethnicity relates to mobility, and how ethnicity articulates with class and gender in a transnational setting? What constitutes, drives, and perpetuates the Korean Wind, and why did the Wind emerge when it did? Finally, in what way has the Korean Wind re-characterized the ethnic space of Yanbian and the subjectivities of the region's people? My dissertation is a multi-sited and long-term transnational ethnography of the cultural logic and politico-economic principles of the Korean Wind. I followed the trajectory of Korean Chinese migrants back and forth between Yanbian and Seoul, Korea, from 2004 to 2011, including eighteen months of field work from June 2008 to December 2009. In the resulting study, I argue that Korean Chinese have fashioned a *mobile ethnicity* as a way of dealing with the contingencies of contemporary

economic restructuring. But the methods they have developed of carving out a better future in the current climate have themselves created unexpected vulnerabilities, sealing many Korean Chinese into a circuit of migration as a transnational ethnic working class. I have developed an ethnographic analysis of the Korean Wind as shaped by the post-Cold War and post-socialist in South Korea and China; in the following chapters I look at Korean Chinese labor migration through the lenses of kinship, development, money, love, and time.

1. *“Gone with the Korean Wind”*

There are around two million Korean Chinese living in China nationwide, mostly concentrated in the northeastern provinces of Jilin, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang. About 700,000 of them, 35 percent of the total, now live in the borderland of Yanbian, an autonomous prefecture in southeastern Jilin province. The Korean Chinese are an ethnic minority group with Chinese nationality, their ancestors having crossed the Tumen River from the Korean peninsula in search of better farming lands beginning in the late nineteenth century. Later, Koreans moved to Manchuria to escape from poverty exacerbated by Japanese imperialism or, in the 1930s and 1940s, to support the independence movement from relative safety outside of Korea. Korean Chinese in Yanbian are mostly the descendants of immigrants from the northern part of Korea—*Hamkyungbukdo*, the northeast region of the contemporary North Korea—who crossed over in the late nineteenth century. Most Korean Chinese in Yanbian still speak a dialect similar to that of *Hamkyungbukdo*, which is right across the river, and maintain the regional food culture and housing style. As the new China was established in 1949, and Yanbian was designated as the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture in 1952, these descendants of Korean immigrants became Chinese nationals,

“proud” to be one of 55 ethnic minorities officially recognized by the Chinese government.² Under the stringent policies of the Cold War era, however, Korean Chinese were forbidden to contact or claim kinship ties to either of the two Koreas, especially South Korea, condemned as a colony of “devil capitalism” and “a baby of imperial America.” Things dramatically changed, however, as China and South Korea normalized diplomatic relations in 1992 and the Cold War came to an end. Korean Chinese have since developed a close relationship with South Korea, mostly through kinship visits and labor migration. First came recognition of cultural and familial ties, a sense of belonging that had been forbidden and forgotten under Cold War politics. Later, a persistent, even obsessive labor migration began, driven by the vast income gap between China and South Korea. This came to be called the Korean Wind, and it dominated the affect, materiality, and futurity of Korean Chinese for the next two decades.

As we saw in the conversation on the bus, the act of “going with the Korean Wind” has been widely accepted as an inevitable life phase for Korean Chinese, thereby remarking a rapid cultural, economic, and political transition in Yanbian. Being “gone” does not simply mean to disappear or leave for Korea or some other foreign countries; rather, it signifies a condition of living, of moving back and forth, a condition to which many Korean Chinese have become accustomed as a deep and essential part of their livelihood. Many wait for the return of family members as well as the money remitted from Korea; some wait while they prepare to leave for Korea or other foreign countries; some are deeply indebted due to multiple attempts to enter Korea through illegal and often dishonest brokers. Some consider the omnipresent phenomenon of “being gone” to possess a pathological force that poses an “ethnic crisis,” and view it as a symptom of a spreading sociological “disease.” This pathology,

² The Chinese ethnic minority policy is based on the notion of “plural singularity” (Mullaney 2011), which recognizes diversity while emphasizing the central control of the government.

it is said, has manifested itself in high divorce rates, deficiencies in childcare, juvenile delinquency, and extravagant spending of the money from Korea. Critics of the “Korean dream” believe that these “disease” factors threaten the stable, sustained ethnic community of Yanbian by “contaminating” the ethnic consciousness of Korean Chinese with capitalism, creating within them a relentless desire to pursue “*money-money*” (*don-don* in Korean, a common Yanbian term). The Korean Wind has imprinted its influence on every corner of Korean Chinese society for the last twenty years.

In this turbulent context, the concept of *wind* (*baram* in Korean) began to be circulated with multi-layered connotations in conjunction with the shifting politico-economic circumstances of the early 1990s—the beginning of the post-Cold War and post-socialist era. First, the Korean Wind emerged as a new fashion among Korean Chinese as part of the new political environment. The circumstances of the Cold War, in particular, the Cultural Revolution, had been the primary condition that formulated Korean Chinese as part of the socialist Chinese nationality by nearly eradicating their ethnic culture and identity. Korean Chinese were redefined as part of the Chinese ethnic group of *chauxianzu*, and were no longer considered ethnic Koreans with legitimate emotional and political attachments to North and South Korea (see chapter 5). The political normalization between China and Korea in 1992, however, enabled Korean Chinese to forge new connections to South Korea. Kinship ties to North Korea, which are much more common among Yanbian Korean Chinese, were gradually obscured as bogus kinship ties to South Korea were created through fake marriages and illegal visa brokers (chapter 1). As a result, the reconnection with South Korea raised critical questions of belonging; how should Korean Chinese situate their ethnicity and identity across several borders, between China, North Korea, and South Korea?

Second, in a more rhetorical sense, the “wind” could be, as in the passage from the Korean Chinese writer Huh Ryunsoon quoted at the beginning, a metaphor that represents the floating subjectivity of Korean Chinese as aimless, rootless, nomadic subjects, without clear belonging to any world. The Korean word for wind, *baram*, indicates not only the flow of air, but also the fashions and collective obsessions shared by a society during a certain period of time. In the latter sense, *baram* could cause people to “flow” in a certain direction, and sometimes people can get lost within the flow. Thus, *baram* structures a vague feeling of the specific moment in a given place, as well as creating a shared temporality that influences the attitudes and actions of contemporaries. Korean Chinese have used the term Korean Wind (*Hankuk Baram*) as a vivid expression of the collective obsession with and pervasive desire for the Korean dream, the dream that Korean Chinese have pursued in the transnational labor migration to South Korea by taking advantage of the vast income gap between China and Korea as well as their ethnic affinity with Koreans. For the last two decades, the Korean Wind has been at once a condition of hope for the future and a destructive power that threatens to dissolve old ties. The Korean Wind has been the decisive element in the creation of a new subjectivity for Korean Chinese, as a mobile ethnicity in the newly rising China. And yet, the wind did not blow in Yanbian until the diplomatic normalization between China and South Korea in 1992 signaling the wane of Cold War politics and the waxing of Chinese post-socialism.

* * *

I hope to accomplish four goals with this dissertation. First, *Mobile Ethnicity* tells the story of the emergence, pervasion, and perpetuation of Korean Chinese transnational migration—the Korean Wind—ethnographically. By illustrating the detailed process of

reconnection between Korean Chinese and South Korea, a long-forbidden homeland, I analyze how Korean Chinese ethnicity, repressed in China during the Cold War, has been revived, promoted, and transformed into a form of currency that enabled Korean Chinese to enter the transnational labor market. I do not simply suggest that the authentic characteristics of Korean Chinese ethnicity or ethnic similarity to Koreans enabled Korean Chinese to wield competitive power or use their ethnic currency in the Korean labor market. Rather, I want to argue that the particular *relationality* of Korean Chinese to Korea—their status as *almost Korean, but not quite*—is precisely what has created Korean Chinese niche in the Korean economy. I will show how Korean Chinese have performed their peculiar ethnic relationality by focusing on the process of entry into and adjustment to South Korea—the newly rising homeland as a market place. Here, I aim to extend the theory of ethnicity by drawing on theories of “articulation” (Laclau & Mouffe 1985) and “performativity” (Butler 1993). I focus on the ways in which the Korean Chinese performance of ethnicity articulates with gender and class, as in fake marriages to Koreans, or how Korean Chinese workers, through their ethnic currency, have made themselves suitable as cheap workers in particular service sectors in Korea. As Korean Chinese migrants have performed their constantly unsettled ethnicity, I argue, they have shaped their labor migration into a site of value production and identity articulation, and have remade themselves into a transnational ethnic working class.

Second, I explore the flip side of the ethnicity that serves as currency in the transnational labor market by looking into the exacerbated *vulnerability* of Korean Chinese migrants once they have entered the circuit of transnational migration. I examine this vulnerability on two levels. First, Korean Chinese migrant workers have been subject to frequent and unpredictable legal changes imposed by the Korean government. Most Korean

Chinese who remained undocumented were granted amnesty in 2007, under a new regulation actually aimed at preventing Korean Chinese from permanently settling in Korea (chapter 4). Under the new law, Korean Chinese migrants can only stay in Korea for a limited number of consecutive years; they are required to return to China every couple of years. As a result, a *spatial split* has opened up, as Korean Chinese view Korea as a place of work and China as a place of resting, and waiting. During the “resting” period in China, migrant laborers generally make no money. They can only spend, as anxiety about unstable financial status rises. In addition, Korean Chinese migrants have in recent years come to feel that they have missed out on the Chinese boom and are lagging behind those who never left to work in Korea (chapter 6). The mobility of Korean Chinese, constrained by visa regulations, has aggravated their vulnerability, although migration was originally supposed to help them attain economic betterment and stability. My observations have been made mostly on the micro level, by looking into the lives of those who are waiting for remittances, for the return of family members, for the opportunity to go to Korea. They are supposed to maintain the household and care for the money sent back by their partners, and yet, the long wait is not always rewarded—partners can be unfaithful or unreliable, remittances may stop (chapter 3). Those who are waiting to leave for Korea tend to stop working in Yanbian, as they often have to be ready to pick up and go on a moment’s notice. Exploring the liminal temporality of *waiting* that has dominated Korean Chinese everyday life and the region of Yanbian, I argue that the body, time, money, and future of Korean Chinese migrants are subordinated to a constantly fluctuating transnational time—I call it *split time*—along with the emergence of new visa regulations and global economic circumstances.

Third, I aim to analyze the adaptation and appropriation of remittance development, driven by the incessant flow of money from Korea and conditioned by transnational temporality. Remittance development has induced rapid urbanization, bringing rural Korean Chinese to cities. It has also reshaped the ethnic composition of the region as Han Chinese migrants have flocked into the city of Yanji in order to serve the thriving leisure industry—karaoke, sauna, and massage—and into the Yanbian countryside, which is being vacated by the outflow of Korean Chinese to the cities and to Korea. The flow of remittances has fundamentally restructured the landscape and ethnic relationships of Yanbian in two respects. First, any remittance-dependent economy is vulnerable to factors such as currency rates and international economic conditions, regardless of the work ethic of individuals, or their strength of purpose, as evinced by what happened when the global financial crisis hit the Korean Chinese labor market in 2008 and 2009 (chapter 6). I aim to illuminate how remittance-dependent development is neither stable nor predictable, given the fluctuations of the global economy. Second, remittance development has shaped a new ethnic interdependency between Han Chinese and Korean Chinese, despite the long ethnic separations of the region. Han Chinese do not remain unaffected by the dramatic social changes generated by the Korean Wind, being a critical part of remittance development as investors as well as service workers. The growing ethnic interdependency can help us situate the Korean Wind as a transnational economic drive to reconfigure the ethnic and urban landscape across and beyond Yanbian—the Korean Wind is about more than just Korean Chinese migration.

Fourth, I examine the intersection of Chinese socialism (specifically “Yanbian socialism”) and the Korean Wind. In response to the current economic development and

social shift conditioned by the Korean Wind, how do Korean Chinese socialist subjects understand at once an economic achievement that is strongly linked to South Korea, the previously forbidden “enemy” homeland, and the rapid development of the modern Chinese economy, led by the Communist Party? How do they situate and make sense of these two different and somewhat conflicting, but intertwined, sources for Yanbian’s economic development? Attempting to answer these questions, I unravel two distinct Korean Chinese responses to the Korean Wind (chapter 5). On the one hand, many Korean Chinese have viewed and pursued the Korean Wind in solely economic terms, foregrounding their Korean ethnicity as a transnational currency. On the other hand, other Korean Chinese, especially dedicated socialists, view their ethnic position in mostly political terms, expressing their deep loyalty to the state of China and the Communist Party instead of interpreting Korean Chinese identity as a transnational construction. I pay attention to this seemingly unambiguous split response to the Korean Wind, and the ways in which Korean Chinese situate their ethnicity between economic and political terms. I argue that vigilance and self-censorship on the issue of ethnicity characterize Korean Chinese as an ethnic minority that deals with multiple modes of belonging—to Korea and to China—in distinct ways.

2. The Overseas Korean Act: Governing the Korean Diaspora

The problem is discrimination against Korean Chinese by the Korean government. Korean Americans and Korean Japanese are free to enter Korea. Why should the Korean government limit Korean Chinese? It's because they are well off whereas we are poor—isn't it? Unlike Koreans who left Korea during the 1970s and 1980s, we Korean Chinese are descendants of those who left the Korean peninsula to live a better life or to protect ourselves when we lost our country or to pursue the anti-Japanese movement in the fight for independence. How can Korea discriminate against Korean Chinese simply because we are poor?

Huh Ryunsoon, *The Windflower* (148)

2.1 The Conditions of the Act

The Overseas Korean Act was passed in 1999. It defined who belonged to the category of the “Overseas Korean” and what benefits they would get in the “home” country, benefits that included free entry and the ability to stay up to two years without a visa, medical insurance, property ownership, and favorable conditions for capital investment. The Act granted a sort of quasi-citizenship to overseas Koreans by providing almost the same rights as Korean citizens could enjoy (Park and Chang 2005). The category of the Overseas Korean, however, was limited to Korean citizens who had lived in foreign countries, along with former Korean citizens and their descendants. Since “Korea” was established as a modern nation state in 1948, “Korean” citizenship only came into being at that time, and consequently certain groups of overseas Koreans—Korean Chinese, Korean Russians and Koreans in Japan who left the Korean peninsula during the colonial period (1909-1945) before Korea was established in 1948—were excluded from the definition of “Overseas Korean.”

In order to provide a better understanding of the background from which the Overseas Korean Act emerged, let me briefly outline the history of Korean migration here. Starting in the late nineteenth century, Koreans began to migrate to China or Russia as seasonal farmers and traders. During the colonial period under imperial Japanese rule (1919-45), many Koreans chose, or were forced, to work in Japan or in Japanese-occupied northeast

China (Lim 2002; Park 2006; Seol and Skrentny 2004). Their descendants in China, Russia, and Japan constitute the majority of the Overseas Korean population, numbering about three and half a million out of a total, worldwide Korean diaspora of six million. When colonial Chosun achieved independence from Japan in 1945, many of these dispersed Koreans returned to Korea, but some did not, either due to the Korean War or because they were already well-settled in their host countries (Kim 2009).

Beginning in the 1950s, the South Korean government was focused on rebuilding a new country from the ruin of the Korean War. Modernization projects enabled rapid economic development during the 1960s and 1970s. During this compressed period of development, labor exports played a critical role in the dramatic rise of the South Korean economy (Athukorala and Manning 1999). Perhaps most importantly, the Korean government promoted the transfer of Korean nurses and miners to Germany and Korean construction workers to the Middle East from the 1960s to the 1980s. Remittances from these Korean emigrants contributed significantly to Korean economic development and the prosperity of individual households.

By the 1980s, however, the situation had changed dramatically, as South Korea had joined Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan as one of the *dragons*—Asian countries that achieved rapid economic development led by strong and in most cases authoritarian states. Korea became a net importer rather than a net exporter of labor. In the early 1990s, the Korean labor market even started suffering from labor shortages, especially in manufacturing. As the wages of Korean workers skyrocketed, the search for cheap labor became more important in the struggle for competitive market power (Han 2003). In addition to declining fertility rates, the expansion of the service sector, and the improving education level of the

overall population, younger Koreans come to prefer to work in white-collar jobs rather than in manufacturing (Athukorala and Manning 1999).

In order to resolve this critical labor shortage, the Korean government devised ways to import migrant workers with programs such as the Industrial Technical Training Program (ITTP), which supplied the manufacturing sector with trainees from South and South East Asia as cheap labor. Entering Korea as trainees, migrant workers sometimes have to depend on brokers who are involved in the illegal migration market. The trainees in the ITTP are regarded not as “workers” because they only stay in Korea temporarily to get trained in manufacturing, although their workload is as heavy as or even heavier than that of regular workers. Korean law does not allow these trainees to have “regular” jobs and prevents them from permanently staying in Korea. Because of harsh labor conditions and extremely low wages in the manufacturing sector, trainees often escaped from their workplace, and became undocumented migrant workers.

A large number of migrants other than trainees have also come to Korea to work. But the quotas on these workers are much smaller than the number of people who want to enter Korea, and as a result, most migrant workers entered Korea through illegal means. Of these immigrants, Korean Chinese have emerged as the most competitive group in the labor market, dominating construction and the service sector. Their advantage comes from their geographical proximity and cultural Korean-ness, and the fact that they speak Korean. The sharp surge of undocumented Korean Chinese immigrants into Korea alarmed the Korean government, thus Korean Chinese were banned from having the right to permanent or long-term residence, even as they continued to flood the labor market.

2.2 Neoliberal Korea

Rising labor migration to Korea should be understood alongside a major shift in the Korean economy as a result of a newly flexible regime of accumulation (Harvey 1991)³ and economic restructuring among East Asian countries. The “four dragons”—Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea—undertook a high-speed, compressed course of development through manufacturing and export-oriented economies in the 1980s (Chow 2002; Athukorala and Manning 1999). But as these countries made a gradual shift to the information technology and service industries in the 1990s, the Korean economy began to transplant its manufacturing to China and other Asian countries in search of cheaper labor, while promulgating the gospels of globalization (*segenbha*) and the information society (Samuel Kim 2000). In the midst of this rapid shift, the Korean government intensively highlighted labor flexibility and creativity, and mobilized informationalization and venture capital (Song 2009), a combination that came to characterize Korean neoliberalism—that is, an ideology of aggressive self-improvement exposed to unlimited competition (Seo 2009).

The financial crisis in 1997 was a turning point that accelerated the spread of neoliberalism in South Korea. During this period, the country underwent rigorous structural adjustments mandated by the IMF. Such structural adjustments were based on neoliberal economic models that emphasized labor flexibility, resulting in soaring numbers of irregular workers. Additionally, as part of the agreement with the IMF, Korea was required to increase economic transparency in

³ In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Harvey argues that Fordism is not simply a system of mass production but a total way of life (125) based on the principles of scientific management. It aims to maximize labor productivity by breaking down each process into component motions and organizing fragmented work tasks according to standardized time and space. Mass production has become a disciplinary regime that coerces people into an unprecedented, high-speed rhythm of life and production. However, Fordism faltered in the face of market rigidity and government control, leading to the restructuring of labor markets in the interest of greater flexibility and a faster pace. The transition of the regime of accumulation from rigidity to flexibility has resulted in increasing geographical mobility, deindustrialization, and devaluation of labor power. In addition, increasing flexibility and mobility have exacerbated the precariousness of life due to a failure to guarantee stable, long-term employment (Hardt & Negri 2004).

order to facilitate the opening of its markets to foreign companies (Lim and Hwang 2002). The IMF sought market-centered policies by minimizing the government's control over the economy (Stiglitz 2003). Less successful companies were merged into bigger corporations, and many people were fired without any safety net. Social services shrank and poverty levels and the number of homeless surged in the late 1990s (Song 2009).

The Korean government's response to the social problems caused by IMF policies was to pursue a number of structural reforms to attract foreign capital. The Overseas Korean Act emerged as one of these reforms. The Korean government announced the rationale for the Act as following: "We," as "global Korea," should secure the free entry, residence, and business activity of diasporic Koreans by recognizing overseas Koreans, not by ethnicity or blood, but by nationality—that is, citizenship (Park and Chang 2005; Seol 2002; Seol and Skrenty 2009). Therefore, the Overseas Korean Act ended up embracing whoever had or used to have "Korean" citizenship, a status that only came into existence in 1948, which resulted in the exclusion of large numbers of overseas Koreans in China, Japan, and Russia.

From the beginning, an Act that denied "blood" ethnic ties could not avoid critiques of its arbitrary inclusions and selective exclusions, which had resulted in a sense of "hierarchical nationality" (Seol & Skrenty 2009). "Rich cousins" from the United States and Japan were included, but not "poor cousins" from China and the former Soviet Union (Park & Chang 2005). The disparate treatment of overseas Koreans depending on their host countries threatened Korean ethnic nationalism and its sense of the "one-ness" and homogeneity of Korean ethnicity (Shin 2006). The Act was especially impactful on the legal status of Korean Chinese. Korean Chinese had moved to China (Manchuria back then) during the colonial period (1909-1945) or even before, and they were granted citizenship after the People's Republic of China was

established in 1949. By the 1990s the two million Korean Chinese constituted a plurality of the six million overseas Korean worldwide, and began to enter the low-end, manual labor market as the largest single immigrant group. But they were not recognized under the Overseas Korean Act, so most of these Korean Chinese immigrants ended up overstaying as undocumented workers. The Korean government found it impossible to control the increasing number of undocumented Korean Chinese workers, and it gradually became a critical social issue.

A discourse of Korean ethnic solidarity became the dominant counter-argument against the Act, the one on which Korean Chinese themselves, NGO activists, and the churches increasingly focused. These groups insisted on colonial history and the Cold War context as critical factors in understanding the history of the Korean diaspora. They began to tell the personal and family histories of individual Korean Chinese to demonstrate their close kinship ties to Korea that were disrupted due to the Korean War and the Cold War.⁴ The stories varied: the ancestors of some Korean Chinese had been forced to go to Manchuria to escape severe poverty, which worsened under Japanese imperialism; others actively fought the Japanese in the cause of an independent Korea; some had wished to return to Korea but were prevented by the Korean War, and yearned for their homeland until they died. In the discourse of Korean ethnic solidarity, Korean Chinese retained their rich history of colonialism and the Cold War, while at the same time they began to appear as socialist subjects who were counter-posed in various ways to Koreans living under capitalism and democracy. South Koreans had heard little about Korean Chinese people or culture until the diplomatic normalization between China and Korea in 1992,

⁴ In fact, the Korean government did begin to recognize the descendants of ancestors who had participated in the independent movement against Japanese imperialism. Once they had proved their status as descendants, they were eligible for monetary compensation from the Korean government, and were given the right to Korean citizenship. In order to prove their eligibility for this recognition, applicants had to testify about their personal and family history, and were sometimes required to provide DNA evidence.

as communist China (*Zhonggong*) was something of a taboo subject under the anti-communist cultural and political environment of the so-called “red complex.”

The Korean government had its own reasons for excluding Korean Chinese from the Overseas Korean Act.⁵ The first stemmed from the fact that the Chinese government insisted that Korean Chinese be recognized as *Chinese*. Since neither China nor Korea granted dual citizenship to their people, the Chinese government was concerned that the Act could work as the medium through which Korean Chinese could convert their citizenship into Korean. The political concern is additionally related to the rumor for the ethnic dependence. China was also worried that the geographical proximity and close ethnic ties between Yanbian and the Korean peninsula could lead Korean Chinese to demand some form of independence. Second, the Korean government was concerned that covering the floating population of Korean Chinese under the Overseas Korean Act would flood the Korean labor market with too much cheap labor, even though undocumented Korean Chinese workers already comprised a majority of the migrant workers in South Korea. And third, Korean Chinese suffered from aftereffects of the Cold War. Along with Korean Chinese, Korean Russians and Korean Japanese who were especially associated with North Korea were also excluded from the Act. It was feared that overseas Koreans with socialist affiliations could be a threat if they were granted unlimited free entry. Even as Cold War politics seemed to be coming to an end, its legacy remained in this policy of differently treating the people of the Korean diaspora depending on their host states.

⁵ In a setting of migration, citizenship is understood beyond the legal rights and obligations. The inclusion/exclusion of immigrants as a member of a certain society is based on a set of “imagined qualities desired of citizen” (Ngai 2004) and “imaginary symbolic citizenship” that the nation state identify the ideal citizen (Friedman 2006). The contention surrounded by the imaginary desired citizen is also revealed in a reunion of the same ethnic people such as in the case of reunion between mainlander Chinese and Hong Kong people (Newendrop 2008), and Japanese and returning Japanese (mainly from Brazil) (Tsuda 2003). The identity of Korean Chinese is understood on the basis of “lack” of the ideal Korean-ness as I illustrate in Introduction.

Although the Korean government has never been explicit about its reasons for the selective exclusion of some overseas Koreans, the stakes were high, and the impact was far-reaching. The Act stimulated heated political debate and demonstrations by human rights activists and churches that advocated the embrace of Korean Chinese as fellow Koreans. These groups raised their voices in support of revising the Overseas Korean Act, insisting the Korean government should not exclude and discriminate against Korean Chinese. Their position is expressed in the novel *Windflower*: “The problem is the discrimination against Korean Chinese by the Korean government. Korean Americans and Korean Japanese are free to enter Korea. Why should the Korean government limit Korean Chinese? It’s because they are well off whereas we are poor--isn’t it?”

2.3 After Amnesty (H-2 Visa): Back and Forth

In 2004, the Korean Constitutional Court eventually found the Overseas Korean Act to be unconstitutional because it unjustly discriminated against some overseas Koreans on the basis of their host states and economic potential. The Overseas Korean Act was rewritten to include those who had previously excluded, granting the same rights to *all* overseas Koreans (through the F-4 visa)—*except* those who engage in simple physical labor, the kind of work that most Korean Chinese did. As a result, Korean Chinese who worked in the service and construction sectors could not take advantage of the F-4 visa, which allowed free entry and long stays in Korea. Instead, beginning in 2005 the Korean government addressed these Korean Chinese workers separately, through the regulation of the H-2 visa, the Overseas Korean Visit-Work Visa. Although this visa was designed for any overseas Koreans in low-skill jobs, in practice, it has

been used mostly by Korean Chinese and Koreans from the former Soviet Union.⁶ The visa is effective for only five years and renewal is not automatic.

Here, I would like to highlight the impact of the revised Overseas Korean Act and the initiation of the H-2 visa—the “visit-work visa”—in two respects (see chapter 4 for a more detailed consideration). First, the H-2 visa was devised for Korean Chinese as a form of amnesty, a way to *rescue* the half-million undocumented Korean Chinese in South Korea. In order to qualify for this amnesty, however, Korean Chinese workers have to leave Korea and stay in China for a year before they can return to Korea, this time being allowed to work for three years. After those three years, they must leave Korea again until the visa expires and they have to apply again. The visa allows Korean Chinese to work in Korea legally, but only for three years at a time. Regardless of this limitation, however, Korean Chinese migrant workers are no longer invisible, undocumented workers beyond the Korean government’s reach—they are officially recognized as an ethnic population governed under special visa regulations. This new inclusion has enabled the government to track and predict the levels and patterns of Korean Chinese migration in and out of South Korea. Korean Chinese migration becomes a matter of population regulation, which treats immigrants as coded and numbered beings in a form of bio-politics of population (Foucault 2007) or “governmentality, that is, the disposition of men and things” (Foucault 1991).⁷ The governance of the Korean Chinese labor population no longer consists of relentlessly tracking down and deporting the undocumented, but rather subtly controlling and ordering

⁶ According to the statistics announced by the Korean government, the total number of foreign nationals is 1,409,577 (as of August 2012) and 40% (570,158) of the population is Korean Chinese. Of this, those who have acquired the Korean citizenship are 68,012. The foreign nationals who purpose to work in Korea are 588,944. Korean Chinese (having H-2 visa) are 295,604, which is more than half of the foreigners working in Korea.

⁷ In “Security, Territory, Population,” Foucault points out that the abstract governing of population is based on an eradicated individual subjectivity, arguing that “[p]opulation is not a collection of juridical subjects in an individual or collective relationship with a sovereign will. It is a set of elements in which we can note constants and regularities even in accidents, in which we can identify the universal of desire regularly producing the benefit of all, and with regard to which we can identify a number of modifiable variable on which it depends” (79).

individuals into specific visa categories (H-2 or F-4), which determine how long they are allowed to work in what fields. Most importantly, the foreign identification provided to these documented Korean Chinese when they are granted H-2 visas constitutes symbolic proof that they are a special group of overseas Koreans. That is, Korean Chinese are now governed as legitimate foreigners working in their ethnic homeland.

This special condition leads to the second point. The new visa regulations for overseas Koreans have resulted in a sharp division and different treatment of overseas Korean according to the kind of visas they hold—F-4 for those who work in professional and business fields, and H-2 for unskilled laborers. The holders of H-2 visas became, in effect, officially recognized as a special migrant class who are allowed to work only in fields designated as simple, physical labor.⁸ This articulation of ethnicity with migrant status and working-class subjectivity culminates in the enactment and implementation of the H-2 visa, which integrates Korean Chinese into the Korean labor market as a transnational ethnic working class, or, as I also call it, the “Korean Chinese migrant class.” I argue that the formation of a Korean Chinese migrant working class was solidified by the visa regulations of the Korean government. The official distinction of Korean Chinese as migrant working class has in turn reinforced discrimination toward Korean Chinese—not only in the labor market but also in Korean society in general. The national mark of “China,” carved in the very term Korean *Chinese*, stamps a strong migrant working-class subjectivity on

⁸ In *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Louis Althusser articulates the way that capitalism has been inevitably reproduced through the reproduction of state apparatuses and a certain subject formation. Here, the role of ideology is crucial in constituting individual into subjects; “all ideology hails and interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject.... I shall suggest that ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals, or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects by that very precise operation that I have called *interpellation* or *hailing*, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace every police hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’”(1971(2001): 117-118). The distinctive *categorization* of Korean Chinese as a working class subject (by the Korean government) enables the Korean labor market to rely on a cheaper pool of labor force of Korean Chinese. It leads to reinforce the national/ethnic hierarchy and keep the labor cost low.

Korean Chinese that in some ways supersedes the Korean ethnic identity of *Korean* Chinese.

Drawing on the exclusive inclusion and inclusive exclusion that Korean Chinese have confronted in the transnational labor market, my dissertation archives the repetitive travels back and forth between Korea and China, China and Korea, imposed by visa regulations. Since 2005,⁹ the bodies, money, time, labor, and futures of Korean Chinese migrant workers have been tightly governed by the temporality set by the H-2 visa, or, as I call it, the rhythm of circulation that has split Korean Chinese lives between two worlds (Chapter 4). Korean Chinese have become free to move, yet also trapped within the circuit of transnational migration (chapter 6).

2.4 Becoming a Transnational Ethnic Working Class

The content, intention, and timing of the Overseas Korean Act (which codified the F-4 visa) and the Overseas Korean Work-Visit Visa (or H-2 visa) reflect a particular historical entanglement with Korean neoliberalism. These laws demonstrate how “global Korea” has interpreted and situated the concept of “ethnicity” and built colonial history and Cold War politics into the logic of neoliberalism. These laws are the epitome of neoliberal governmentality, distinguishing deserving overseas Koreans from non-deserving ones on the basis of the market potential that each national group is able to generate (Ong 1999; 2006). As Comaroff and Comaroff argue, “ethnicity has its origins in the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy” (1992); each group of overseas Koreans has encountered the homeland of Korea with a different political orientation and economic potential, and each has thereby been dissimilarly treated by the homeland. The Korean government also disparately treats each group based on the different kinds of ethnic currency they generate, which

⁹ In *Migrants for Export* (2010), Robyn Magalit Rodriguez demonstrates how the Philippine state has systematically brokered its own people to the world as migrant workers. While the government plays a leading role in controlling and exporting the migration in the case of Philippine case, the state of China and Korea have not actively engaged the process of migration, the migration that has been expanded by illegal brokers, by manipulating kinship, marriages, and work visa.

range from providing investment capital to teaching English to providing cheap labor. In this special topography of the Korean diaspora, Korean Chinese become exclusively viewed as a migrant working class on the basis of their particular in-between-ness, their status as *almost Korean, but not quite*, the gap between their Korean-ness and their Korean Chinese-ness.

This asymmetrical affiliation to the homeland hinges on the Cold War ideologies and politics that still dominate the politics and consciousness of Korean society. The Overseas Korean Act initially excluded Korean diasporic groups with socialist associations, regardless of their colonial and Cold War histories; these included ethnic Koreans in China, Russia, and Japan (those who supported and were supported by North Korea). The Korean government construed these socialist legacies not only as a threat to a Korean society that had long been intimidated by the “red complex,” but also as a troublesome association with the media image of dreary, poverty-stricken, and totalitarian socialist countries. In the midst of the ongoing Cold War politics of the Korean peninsula, Korean Chinese were still seen as “socialist subjects,” a subjectivity that reinforced their ethnic currency as cheap and disposable migrant ethnic workers coming from “poor,” “socialist” China.

Korean visa regulations show the way that ethnicity works in both economic and political terms. Despite the long history of Korean diaspora, the Korean government did not enact the Overseas Korean Act until 1999 when the Korean economy was suffering from economic restructuring. In the Act, Korean ethnicity is expressed as a bridge of emotional belonging to and political association with the homeland, as an “imagined community” conceived as a, horizontal comradeship “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail” (Anderson 2006:7). Ethnic membership facilitates group formation as part of global Korea through ethnic imagination—a “political artificiality” and “ethnic fiction” in Weber’s term

(Sollors 1996:55; Weber 1922)—with something like quasi-citizenship granted to overseas Koreans in the form of the F-4 visa. Yet, as seen in the differentiated and discriminatory granting of this quasi-citizenship on the basis of host states, overseas Koreans come to have dissimilar affiliations with and different imaginations of the homeland. For example, a young Korean American might imagine Korea as a place to make money by teaching English, whereas middle-aged Korean Chinese might relate to Korea as a place of harsh discrimination and low-end physical labor. The Act emerges as an expression of the neoliberal governmentality that the Korean government claims to advocate, emphasizing the market value and economic potential of each overseas Korean. In other words, the Act does not simply channel each overseas Koreans to Korea as a homeland, but serves as a force that governs lives and futures, especially for Korean Chinese who stayed undocumented partly due to the exclusion from it.

Both the Act that excluded Korean Chinese and the H-2 visa that aims to include Korean Chinese as migrant workers have reinforced their vulnerability, economically as well as politically, forming them into a transnational ethnic working class subject to the fluctuations of visa laws. Yet Korean Chinese are vulnerable not only in Korea, but also in a rapidly privatizing and increasingly neoliberal China, as I discuss at length in later chapters. With respect to Korean Chinese vulnerability, two fundamental themes need more discussion. First, the particular currency attached to Korean Chinese ethnicity has been rejuvenated, deployed, and promoted by the transnational labor market as well as by themselves. Second, the short-term temporality imposed by visa regulations has shaped the bodies, economic fortunes, and futurities of Korean Chinese transnational workers and their families.

3. The Formation of Mobile Ethnicity

3.1 The Currency of Ethnicity

During the field research, I often observed Korean Chinese branding themselves as a mobile ethnicity by using multiple metaphors on the basis of their long migration history, referring to themselves as the wind (*baram* in Korean) the nomads (*ddeodori* in Korean), the rootless (*bucheo* in Korean) and the border-crossers (*guojing minzhu* in Chinese). Chinese economic reforms encouraged Korean Chinese to become more mobile, many of them moving to larger Chinese cities and foreign countries (mainly Russia and North Korea) in search of better prospects (chapter 1). The Korean Wind was the most influential *wind* that unsettled Korean Chinese in conjunction with the transnational labor market. In this process, Korean Chinese have ended up performing their ethnicity in a certain way by meeting the expectation of the transnational market (Chapter 4). Most of all, the new institutions and new responsibilities generated by neoliberal governmentality both in China and Korea have rapidly challenged the limited identity of Korean Chinese as inhabitants of an ethnic zone on the margin of China (chapters 1, 2, and 5). Going beyond this parochial ethnic status, Korean Chinese migration stories tell us about the peculiar role and multiple forms of ethnicity they have adopted to generate a special currency and value in the post-Cold War and post-socialist era.

Even though I aim to overcome the view of ethnicity as a biological and cultural marker that demarcates the inclusion and exclusion of social groups, I do not mean to dismiss the complexity and elusiveness of the concept as a quintessential part of identity. Ethnic boundaries are maintained and reinforced through exclusion of and interaction with other groups (Barth 1969); ethnicity is confined to “named human populations with shared ancestry myth, histories, and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity”(Smith 2001);

ethnicity can function both as a term of exclusion, a clear boundary marker keeping out certain groups, and as a term of inclusion, aimed at removing boundaries and discrimination against othered groups (Chow 2002:25).

Drawing on these studies of ethnicity as a medium of identity formulation through boundary making, I push my interest toward how the differences and boundaries constituted by ethnicity have intertwined with the emergence of a neoliberal global economy and related politics. In other words, I aim to relate mobile ethnicity to conversations about ethnicity as a site of “value production” (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009:4) and “cultural currency” (Catelino 2008). Recent studies have started conceptualizing the “identity industry,” “Ethnicity Inc.,” (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009), “ethno-enterprisez” (Catelino 2004,2008), “natural economic groups” (Dirlik 2000:129), and “ethnic entrepreneurs” (DeHart 2010), offering various perspectives on how ethnic difference is integrated and interpolated into the domain of the market. Culture emerges as a site to generate expediency through copyright, bureaucratization, and commodification (Yudice 2004). Moreover, ethnic difference is used to bolster economic and political claims of cultural authenticity, tradition, and history, as if the ethnic group owns its ethnic attributes (Comaroff & Comaroff 2002). The economic currency that ethnic culture creates can also help to secure the political sovereignty of ethnic groups, as seen in the case of Native Americans in the United States (Catelino 2008). Economic and political sovereignty can in turn rearticulate and reinforce ethnic identity (chapter 5).

Analyzing ethnicity as a site of “value production” and as a source of the commodification of cultural difference, I am also informed by the idea of “contingent articulation” (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: xii) in exploring the way that Korean Chinese articulate their ethnicity with class, gender, and nationality, especially in a transnational setting. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*,

Laclau and Mouffe conceptualized “articulation” as any practice “establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (105). The point is that it is impossible to have an completely fixed identity— rather, there is only a “partial fixation,” proceeding from the openness of the social, which results in the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity (112-113). The concept of contingent articulation provides insights for the case of Korean Chinese culture in the sense that ethnicity does not stand alone in deciding who Korean Chinese are and what they should be like. But ethnicity—always situated in relation to other ethnicities—is a nodal point merges with class, gender, and nationality when it enters the circuit of transnational migration as a mobile ethnicity that generates a specific economic currency.

The following chapters will evince the contingent articulation of ethnicity ethnographically. For instance, Korean Chinese are commonly perceived, not only in Korea, but also in China, as “workers,” “brides,” “nannies,” and “cheap construction workers” from “socialist” China. In addition, Korean Chinese migrants are commonly known to fake kinship ties to Koreans through illegal migration brokers, and to use fake identities while working as migrant laborers in Korea (chapters 1 and 4). All these bracketed perceptions of Korean Chinese have opened up new identities for Korean Chinese on the transnational labor market, while, at the same time, they enable Korean Chinese to perform the expected “ethnic” roles.

A sort of oscillating ethnic identity has been manifested in the image of transnational Korean Chinese migrants, complete with stereotypes that I learned from my multi-sited field research in China and Korea. There are many examples. Korean Chinese read and write the Korean language, but they speak in a strong Yanbian accent; they share a colonial history with Koreans, but they grow up as socialist subjects in China, a very different situation from Koreans

who grow up in capitalist society; they eat similar foods as Koreans, but have different dress and makeup codes and social manners. Along with these ethnic stereotypes of Korean Chinese duality, I have learned that Korean Chinese-ness has been built and defined according to what it lacks of the stereotypes of Korean-ness that have been constructed by the idea that “authentic” Koreans live only in the territory of Korea. That is, the peculiar ethnic relationality of Korean Chinese as “almost Korean, but not quite” has created and reinforced the gap between Korean-ness and Korean Chinese-ness. My ethnographic work has observed, among other things, the efforts of Korean Chinese to fill this gap by performing their ethnicity, particularly in the Korean labor market.

Here I borrow the concept of “performativity” that Judith Butler developed in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) in order to overcome dichotomous, fixed understandings of gender identity constructed between nature and culture, biology and sociology, determinism and voluntarism. She mainly argues that sex becomes a naturalized norm and that gender is the effect of the constraints of normativity, produced through the forcible heterosexual normativity (Butler 1990). Developing this argument in *Bodies that Matter*, Butler argues that “performativity is not a singular act, for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition”(Butler 1993: xxi). Her point is that gender identity is the effect of a compulsory reiteration of gender norms rather than a pre-existing essence or an intractable construction (Weeks 1998: 125-134). Thus, there emerges room to alter gender norms through reiterations, and the political possibility to subvert gender norms. Despite the reiterative practice of regulatory norms, the consequences of repetition of norms would not be the same, and thus, we could have new types of cultural emergence and disobedience. In this subversion of

regulatory normativity, Butler discovers the possibility to reorganize sexual normativity. Although we comply with the norms, we can alter our performance and fail to reproduce the identity, in what has been called the “politics of disidentity” (Yudice 2003:57), thereby enabling the subversion of gender norms. Yet according to Butler, performativity is achieved not by an intention or subversive agency, but by the reiterative regulatory norm; it is neither voluntary nor detrimental.

The concept of performativity has been mainly developed in relation to gender identity. But the performativity theory can be helpful in analyzing Korean Chinese culture, in that Korean Chinese migrant workers continue to articulate ethnicity with class, gender, and nationality as they move back and forth between China and Korea. Since Korean Chinese are “almost Korean, but not quite,” they attempt to reconcile their Korean-ness with their Korean Chinese-ness. For example, some Korean Chinese migrant workers try not to be noticed as Korean Chinese in Korea, notably through the self-regulation of their Yanbian accent. And yet, as soon as they return to Yanbian, they will try *not* to speak in the Seoul accent for fear of mockery by their peers (Chapter 4 and 6). In addition, Korean Chinese migrant workers tend to act like “humble workers” in Korea, saving every penny, whereas once they are back in China they tend to show off what they have achieved in Korea by spending money entertaining friends and relatives (*qingke*). Korean Chinese perform different ethnic norms depending on time and place, switching modes of ethnic performance in what I call the “split life” (chapter 4).

Their performance of being *almost Korean, but not quite*, should be discussed in light of Homi Bhabha, whose work is especially conditioned by the context of colonial India. In *Of Mimicry and Man*, Bhabha describes “mimicry,” borrowed from Lacan, as one of the illusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge, and asserts that it is “the desire for a

recognizable Other as a subject of a difference that is *almost the same but not quite*” (1994:122). In other words, mimicry is an attempt to disavow the difference of oneself from the Other and to reform and appropriate the Other, fixing the colonial subject as a partial presence (126). However, colonial mimicry is not a simple narcissistic identification with the Other, or a desire for the impossibility of the Other. Rather, while not having an obvious desiring object, colonial mimicry has “strategic objectives,” producing an anomalous representation of the colonized. Even though I am aware that Korean Chinese transnational migration differs greatly from colonial India, and Korean Chinese are not actually “mimicking” or trying to become exactly like “Koreans,” the concept of mimicry—“almost the same, but not quite”—is essential for me to develop my discussion of the particular way in which Korean Chinese have created and promoted their ethnic niche and relationality and become integrated into the transnational labor market. Korean Chinese do not make an effort to mimic Koreans, but do play with ethnic affinity and national difference.

Shedding light on a series of articulatory practices and performativities of ethnicity, my dissertation does not mean to examine *the* specific ethnic characteristics “owned” by Korean Chinese, or their savvy mobilization of an “authentic” ethnic economy in order to generate new capital. Instead, I look into the way that Korean Chinese and the responding labor market have mutually discovered, promoted, and mobilized specific “niches” as a means of value production in the ethnic labor economy, and how these niches have put Korean Chinese into a special domain of the Korean labor market, as live-in nannies, restaurant cooks and waitresses, hotel cleaning ladies, and construction workers. On this point I argue that the flexible and fleeting ethnic location of Korean Chinese—“almost Korean, but not quite”—is the very condition that has generated the persistent Korean Chinese transnational labor market. In other words, the

peculiarities of Korean Chinese ethnicity, as Korean with a “poor,” “socialist,” “Chinese” difference, has become articulated with and performed by a working-class subjectivity. The ethnicity is also articulated with and interpolated to gender, appearing in problematic real/fake marriages, mostly between Korean men and Korean Chinese women (Chapter 1 and 3), and with national disparities between China and Korea, disparities that are used as grounds for ethnic discrimination toward Korean Chinese working in Korea. The Korean Chinese stories I have compiled tell us that “identity economy” (Comaroff & Comaroff 2008) is not simply generated by commodification of authentic identities and ethnic attributes, but by articulating and performing ethnic relationality—such as Korean Chinese identity with / difference from Koreans.

3.2 Transnational Temporality

As I introduced in Prologue, I started my field research on Korean Chinese transnational migration in 2004 when most Korean Chinese were undocumented and under a high risk of deportation. But this dissertation mainly focuses on the post-amnesty, looking closely into the emerging temporality shaped by the H-2 visa, which requires a “1-3-2” rhythm of circulation: a one-year return to China after amnesty, then three years of work in Korea, followed by two years back in China, after which a new visa must be obtained to return to Korea. Since these new visa regulations allowed many more Korean Chinese to legally enter and work in Korea than in the pre-amnesty era, transnational migration became even more preponderant in Yanbian. The dominance of transnational labor has dramatically transformed affect and materiality, and understandings of money, time, and the future, as I explore in the following chapters. I pay a particular attention to emerging post-amnesty temporalities and the ways in which laboring bodies have been constituted through the imposition of the “1-3-2” rhythm on Korean Chinese migrant workers. Lefebvre suggests that the rhythm of everyday life is produced by the

combination of cyclical time with linear time. He also highlights that for there to be rhythm, there must be repetition in movement, and that the rhythm results in a new becoming with difference (Lefebvre 2004: 78-79). Pushing further the concept of Lefebvre's rhythm, repetition with difference, I additionally take into account rhythm as a governmental force of life, a rhythm that constitutes a new kind of Korean Chinese subjectivity.

Rhythm and time functioning as a governmental force has been long discussed in conjunction with work conditions, in particular the setting of the modern factory. In the chapter on "The Working Day" in *Capital*, Marx points out the two constituent parts of the working day—"necessary labor time and surplus labor time" (341). Labor time requires the reproduction of the labor power of workers, and the duration of labor time depends on the duration of surplus labor time—that time the worker spends resting, sleeping, feeding, washing, and clothing. The worker, who has no means of production other than his own body, "must be able to work tomorrow with the same normal amount of strength, health, and freshness as today" (343). This regularity of the working day—"tomorrow as today"—could be enabled by the use of surplus labor hours to reproduce the same strength of labor power every day. However, under the extreme extraction of labor power to maximize surplus value, labor hours encroach more and more on the surplus labor hours, given the 24-hour limit of the working day. Therefore, the laboring body eventually deteriorates under the rhythm and demands of the working day—which results in the extreme alienation of workers from their own bodies.

What Marx illustrates is that the working day is based on a manipulation of basic everyday life; it represents a reification of the natural rhythm and meter of everyday practice, in the interests of maximizing the productive capacity inscribed in the temporality of the act. In "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism," E. P. Thompson similarly investigates the

temporality of working days, with more focus on the formation of modern time. Thompson discusses how the spread of clock-time in the labor process led to the emergence of durational time. Time, in industrial society, becomes abstract, homogenous, linear, and task-fragmented, as opposed to the pre-industrial experience of time as concrete, cyclical, and task-oriented (Thompson 1967)¹⁰. According to Thompson, time eventually arises as a site of contention between workers and employers: “Workers had accepted the categories of their employers and learned to fight back within them. They had learned their lesson, that time is money, only too well (91).” At the same time, the disciplining of work-time has become a mechanism of social integration and part of unwilled collective realities, wherein the agency of individuals is transposed to the horizon of institutional norms (Thompson 1967; Binkely 2009).¹¹

Whereas Thompson sees time as a means of institutionalizing labor exploitation and controlling working bodies, Foucault focuses instead on the way in which time becomes a socialized means to produce docile bodies through modern institutions such as prisons, schools, and the military. Here, temporality plays a critical role in the ongoing and open-ended practice of government, and in the self-forming work of subjectification itself (Binkely 75). In *Discipline and*

¹⁰ Akhil Gupta is critical of the distinctive transition possibly applied in creating the binary temporality of Self and cultural Other. By looking at the concept of the “rebirth” of human life and commodity, he demonstrates that these temporal distinctions—such as pre-industrial vs. industrial time, or Self vs. Other—are blurred and indistinct. Gupta argues that the lived experience of time in the modern Western world is poorly explained by postulating linearity and cyclicity as opposing and essential principles (Gupta, 1992). I take Gupta’s critique as a useful point in understanding the mixture of flexibility and regularity. Two contrasting and conflicting temporalities are competing in the everyday life of Korean Chinese due to their dependence on insecure daily wage labor; they are seeking flexible labor while at the same time they want regular labor—which is how they visualize a stable life.

¹¹ Arlie Russel Hochschild effectively discussed contemporary time-discipline in *The Time Bind*. While looking into the lives of workers for a U. S. company called Amerco, she elaborates on the way that work has dominated domestic life, by showing how time is divided and re-deployed into divisions such as work time and family time. She traces this time management back to Taylorist “scientific management,” which imposes rigorous standards of efficiency on the work place and individual workers. Under Taylorism, time was precisely equated with production and money, and so time required measurement and saving. She also argues that “the social world that draws a person’s allegiance also imparts a pattern to time. The more attached we are to the world of work, the more its deadlines, its cycles, its pauses, and interruptions shape our lives and the more family time is forced to accommodate to the pressures of work” (2000: 45-52). Here, family time is subject to industrial time.

Punish, Foucault elaborates on *the control of activity*, investigating the relationship between the body and time through various examples of disciplinary mechanisms. Foucault displays the timetable as an exemplary means to establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, and regulate the cycles of repetitions. In addition, he discusses how physical discipline managed by time leads to the “temporal elaboration of the act” through the example of marching troops on the basis of a collective and obligatory rhythm imposed from the outside; “the act is broken down into its elements; the portions of the body, limbs, articulation is defined; each movement are assigned a direction, an aptitude, a duration; their order of succession is prescribed. Time penetrates the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power”(152). Modern institutions such as classrooms and armies have inscribed temporal elaboration on bodies, and the deployment of duration in the act has become autotomized without obviously revealing the governing subjects. Foucault analyzes discipline not as an art of distributing bodies and of extracting time from them, but as a process of composing forces in order to assemble an efficient machine. The “serialization” of body movement and exercise becomes a way of ordering earthly time and serving to economize time (162-164). Yet, in all these temporalization processes, the disciplining subjects are ambiguous, and thus the ultimate motivation appears unwilled and unseen, concealed in the remote planning schemes of institutions (Binkely 2009:73)¹²

The discussion of time as a governmental force—both as a means for labor exploitation and as a socialized disciplinary mechanism—is apt for the analysis of Korean Chinese working bodies and their subjectivity in the sense that Korean Chinese migrants have been subject to

¹² Although time penetrates the individual body from outside, Foucault does not see temporal discipline as an omnipotent power: “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of exercise. It is not a triumphant power, which because of its own excess can pride itself on its omnipotence; it is a modest, suspicious power, which functions as a calculated, but permanent economy. These are humble modalities, minor procedures, as compared with the majestic rituals of sovereignty or the great apparatuses of the state” (170).

multiple temporalities that have controlled the pattern and rhythm of their migrations. Here, my interest is not only in the temporality shaped by strict visa regulations and the rhythm of “1-3-2” that the Korean government imposes on the migrants. I am also attentive to the particular temporality to which their working bodies must get accustomed in order to endure the transnational, split time of their particular migratory rhythm back and forth between China and Korea (chapter 4). I have frequently heard Korean Chinese migrant workers testify that their healthy bodies are their basic means of production, and that caring for the body is essential to maintain physically intensive labor. Care for the self emerges as a lingering theme in the narratives of Korean Chinese migrants who have lived and worked in transnational time.

I take Foucault’s discussion of the government of the self as an analytical point of departure to examine Korean Chinese care for their bodies, money, and time, as Foucault offers insights on the relationship of the self with itself when situated in unstable and vulnerable transnational circumstances. Foucault’s interview on the hermeneutics of the self (1980) introduces the concept of a “contact point” that accounts for the government of the self—techniques of domination as well as techniques of the self.

The *contact point*, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think, government. Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, governing people is not a way to force people to do what they governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assumes coercion and processes through which *the self is constructed or modified by himself*” (Foucault 1993: 203-4; emphasis added).

Foucault points out the production of autonomous and self-regulating subjectivity is key to government of the self—that is, an action of the “self on self” (Dean 1999). Modern political power does not take the form of the domination of subjectivity, but come to depend upon a web of technologies for fabricating and maintaining self-government (Miller & Rose 1990: 26-28). Yet, Foucault still sees the government of the self as having an ethical dimension, since it can be seen

as the practice of forging the self in relation to existing rules of conduct or styles of existence. Drawn from the Greeks' self-discipline, Foucault views the government of the self as a form of "caring for the self": "one cannot care for the self without knowledge. The care for self is of course knowledge of self... but it is also the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct or of principles, which are at the same time truths and regulations. To care for self is to fit one's self out with these truths. That is where ethics is linked to the game of the truth" (Foucault 1987:16). From this statement, we see that caring for the self—government of the self—requires a relationship with the self, with others, and with regulations, and assumes self-autonomy and self-sufficiency. It is also accompanied by continuous self-modification and self-invention, endlessly negotiations between external coercion and self-adaptation. However, I find that in caring for the self, the self is undifferentiated and the caring is un-contextualized. And the particular purpose and consequence of caring for the self remain abstract or unknown.

Drawing on the discussion of time as a government force and self-modification as caring for the self, I push further to situate the self as a gendered, classed, and ethnicized subject constituted through *transnational time* based on the multiple temporalities that emerge from moving between different legal regulations, between different paces and densities of time. Throughout the dissertation, I argue that transnational migration initiated to care for the self and its future does not necessarily lead to economic rewards. Rather, the care sometimes ends up serving labor exploitation and even causing bodily deterioration as the migrant workers strive to make their bodies more marketable. In the following chapters, I highlight how the transnational temporality that Korean Chinese migrants and their families have lived with for the last two decades is a major principle that constitutes the Korean Chinese as a transnational ethnic working class and that reshapes the ethnic space of Yanbian, integrating it into the transnational economy.

3.3 Chapters

My dissertation is composed of six chapters. In chapter 1, *Gone With the Korean Wind: The Formation of Mobile Ethnicity*, I show how Korean Chinese living on the ethnic borderland have been gradually integrated into larger national and transnational economies. I especially historicize the Korean Wind as an epochal occurrence happening at the intersection of post-Cold War and post-socialist transformations, a circumstance that has enabled Korean Chinese to claim their long-forgotten kinship to the forbidden homeland of South Korea. My ethnography archives the starkly contrasting economies of Korean Chinese kinship with the two Koreas. Whereas Korean Chinese cultivate sympathetic kinship ties to North Korea, frequently transferring goods and money to those who have suffered from that country's dire economy, they consider kinship with South Korea mostly as a means of gaining invitation rights through faking and making marriages and documents (or, as I term it, *paper kinship*). I argue that Korean Chinese challenge the very biological basis of kinship by crafting and manipulating kinship as a commodity that confers the ability to visit (and work in) South Korea.

In chapter 2, *Live or Leave: The Liminal Life and Remittance Development*, I explore the rapid urbanization and economic development of Yanbian, a remarkable change driven by the flow of remittances, mainly from Korea. This chapter primarily examines the way that internal migration intersects with and is influenced by transnational migration, with a focus on a particular hesitation that Korean Chinese have displayed: living in Yanbian, or leaving. My ethnographic emphasis is on differentiated mobility by ethnicity and the region's growing dependency on Korean money, as I examine stories of Korean Chinese migrants, South Korean businessmen, and new, incoming Han Chinese. I argue that mobility has been differentiated by ethnicity, leading ethnic groups to have different ranges, routes, and life choices. But I also argue that differentiated mobility has

deepened interconnections between Han Chinese and Korean Chinese (as between service providers and customers), both of whom have become interdependent parts of the remittance economy.

In chapter 3, *Labor of Love: The Economy of Waiting and Affective Currency*, I situate remittances as a particular form of money with a future-oriented temporality, functioning not only as money but also as gift. My ethnographic accounts—stories of the families of migrant workers waiting for them to return—show the contradictory work of remittances as both a means of economic prosperity and a source of moral crisis, disrupting traditional family values and stable marital relationships as a side-effect of “capitalist contamination.” I argue that the remittances have not only reshaped intimate relationships but also maintained the flow of Korean Chinese mobility, despite aggravating moral and sexual tensions.

In chapter 4, *Split Life: Bodies and Time Between the Two Worlds*, I examine how the lived experience of transnational migration is structured by the peculiar rhythm and temporality that is imposed by the visa regulations of the South Korean government. My argument is twofold. First, I highlight the spatial division created by this repetitive migration: South Korea is a place for *making* money, whereas Yanbian is a place for *spending* money. Second, laboring bodies have become adjusted to frequent movements: Korea is a place for working (productive labor), Yanbian is a place for resting (reproductive labor). Under this split in spatial practices, I argue, migrants have internalized a rhythm—a back and forth—that serves as a governing force on the laboring body, thereby making care for the body more difficult, and prolonging its exploitation in intensive labor.

In chapter 5, *Vigilant Ethnicity: Encounters with the Forbidden Homeland*, I examine how the ethnic politics of Korean Chinese Communist Party members has developed in response to the

Korean Wind, South Korea having long been considered a forbidden capitalist enemy. The elderly party members I interviewed exemplify a sharp split in the politics of ethnicity that distinguishes economic intention from political position; they are highly economized through transnational migration to Korea while at the same time intensely politicized because of their tight identification with China as socialist subjects. I argue that the combination of a vigilant ethnic politics with a sense of multiple belonging is what constitutes and generates Korean Chinese as a *mobile ethnicity* in the post-Cold War and post-socialist circumstance.

In chapter 6, *Between Two Dreams: From Dagong (Worker) to Laoban (Entrepreneur)*, I examine new reflections and re-evaluations of the Korean Wind within and beyond Yanbian in the wake of the global rise of the Chinese economy. Since the financial crisis of 2008 dramatically altered the terms of the Korean dream by greatly increasing Chinese economic clout, many Korean Chinese have turned their attention to a new “Chinese dream.” My ethnographic focus is on the social imperative that has risen in Yanbian that encourages Korean Chinese migrants to transform themselves into entrepreneurs who manage their own money, businesses, and futures. Yet the Korean Chinese, many of whom have grown accustomed to working as physical laborers in South Korea, sometimes for a decade or more, find it quite difficult to compete in the new Chinese socio-economic context. This chapter elaborates on the struggles of Korean Chinese migrants caught between two dreams and the futurity that they must constantly reimagine in the midst of a fluctuating and unpredictable global economy.

Chapter 1. “*Gone with the Korean Wind*”: The Formation of *Mobile Ethnicity*

Yanbian 4: Yanbian is Going

There are people who think Yanbian¹ is in Yanji,
Or in *Gurogongdan* and *Sumon*,²
But that is what people say who do not know things.
Yanbian came with a small basket carried by cow (from *Chosun*)
It once collapsed during the Cultural Revolution—
Later, it was revived like vegetables in the Yanji West Market,
And became famous along with *Kimchi* in front of Changchun train station.
Later, to Beijing, to Shanghai,
It was stretched like noodles.
Yanbian is everywhere in the big cities of China.
Nowadays it goes to Korea via ship and plane
We can hear news from there, from restaurants and construction fields,
But it is a little.
To the east, Tokyo, to the North, Habarosque,
To Saipan, San Francisco, Paris, and London,
There is no place without Yanbian in the world.
Everybody's prepared to leave with fake passports or fake marriages.
Someday, perhaps, we will find Yanbian on the moon (after everybody is gone).

Sukhwa, the Series of Poem of <*Yanbian*>

On a sunny day in June 2009, I had a chance to go hiking with a group of Korean Chinese. Since the healthy body and quality of life have become widespread concerns in the wake of the current economic development of China, hiking is an increasingly popular leisure activity amongst Korean Chinese in Yanbian, where there are ranges of beautiful mountains. Hiking with many different groups became one of my major opportunities for participant observation that allowed access to Korean Chinese everyday life: I could hear about personal life histories while exploring the geography of Yanbian. This time we were

¹ Here, “Yanbian” signifies not only an actual place—the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture—but also the symbolic home of Korean Chinese culture in general. What is on the move in this poem is not only the people of Yanbian, but also the symbolic Yanbian, which has been transferred along with migrant workers to other places, such as Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, and so forth.

² These are districts in and near Seoul, where Korean Chinese both live and work in large numbers.



Photo 1. The Tumn River from Reguansan. The Left Side of the River is North Korea and the right side is Yanbian. By June Hee Kwon(2009)

headed to a mountain called *Reguang*. Standing on the peak, I could see the long flow of the Tumen River, which serves as a natural and territorial border between China and North Korea. Yanbian's character as a border zone was more vividly impressed on me. A small town on the North Korean side, looking impoverished, dilapidated, and sparsely populated, in stark contrast to the Chinese side, formed the main backdrop for our conversation on the mountaintop. The hiking club members, mostly well-off Korean Chinese, shared personal stories; how (much long ago) their families moved to Yanbian and how they have dealt with their families living in both North and South Korea. But they ended up highlighting how proud they were of being a national member of globally rising China—the triumphant Chinese socialism in a rapid economic development. In this conversation, I found it ironical that these members made a slight distinction between the Chinese economic success and

that of Yanbian, the Korean Chinese autonomous prefecture which has been run by the different principle due to the ethnic zone on the border. Here, Yanbian is an absolute part of Chinese territory while, at the same time, Yanbian seems to be a distinctive zone from the rest of China (the zone of Han Chinese), as if it were not quite China. In addition, in an ordinary language habit, Korean Chinese indicate “Chinese” as Han Chinese, distancing Korean Chinese themselves from these “real” Chinese whereas Korean Chinese call themselves *chosunjok* that conveys a sharp ethnic distinction from Han Chinese despite their shared Chinese citizenship. The constant evocation of Korean Chinese—Yanbian as a “border zone” and Korean Chinese as “settler ethnic minority” jumping the attachment amongst China, North and South Korea—is the point of departure for this chapter. It is an ambiguous territorial and ethnic identification that I witnessed throughout the fieldwork, characterizing who Korean Chinese are and what Yanbian is like.

This chapter is to stage Yanbian as an ethnic margin—culturally and geographically—and Korean Chinese as *mobile ethnicity* on the constant move in the following three sections, exploring how “Yanbian is going” as the poem describes. First, I introduce the historiography of Korean Chinese border crossing and the geography of border landscape of Yanbian. In this section, I portray the trajectory of Korean Chinese migration and settlement in conjunction with the modern history—from the Japanese occupation of Manchuria, to the establishment of China, to the Cultural Revolution, and to the open economy and politics of China. Second, my focus is shifted to the Korean Chinese mobility after the declaration of the economic reform and open economy (1980-2000), tracing the fashions that have dominated Yanbian; *North Korean Wind*, *Soviet Wind*, and (*South*) *Korean Wind*³, each *wind*

³ In the following, the Korean wind indicates the South Korean wind (*hankuk baram*).

which is local periodization of contemporary social changes in Yanbian's terms. In this part, I analyze the way that Korean Chinese have gradually connected this ethnic margin to other Chinese larger cities and other countries (mostly North Korea, Russia, and South Korea), by moving across and beyond Yanbian, and thereby developing new imagination and sense of space. Third, of the *winds*, I highlight the recent strong influence of the *Korean wind*, in particular, on reorganizing the structure and meaning of Korean Chinese kinship. I trace the way that Korean Chinese have rejuvenated the value attached to long-separated and broken kinship with South Koreans due to the political reason under the Cold War context while gradually dismissing the tie with North Koreans, the tie that could not bring about the actual currency. I articulate this contrasting kinship practice as "the economy of kinship" on the basis of ethnographic observation that demonstrates the contingent and unstable meaning and practice of kinship. In so doing, I argue that the new kinship practice—rejuvenating, manipulating, and manufacturing kinship via faking documents or real/fake marriages as I term it *paper kinship*—has generated the preponderant transnational migration in Yanbian. Exploring the formation of *mobile ethnicity*—*moving through winds*, my aim is to introduce the way that Yanbian has been diverted from the tie to North Korea due to the geographical and ideological proximity, and swiftly integrated into the circuit of transnational labor migration to South Korea, a homeland and market place that shows the high demand for Korean Chinese as a cheap source of labor.

1.1.Border Landscape

1.1.1 Border Historiography: Story of *Beyond*

The theme of border crossing is deeply ingrained in the oral histories that I have heard, and the Korean Chinese history books that I have collected.⁴ The stories commonly start off, by saying that Korean Chinese bravely and secretively crossed the Tumen River and endured the biting cold to reclaim barren land in China—which was part of the Qing dynasty’s “holy land.”⁵ Although it was forbidden for Koreans to cross the river and cultivate the Qing land in the late 19th Century, poor Korean farmers sneaked into the holy land untouched for hundreds of years, inspired by the saying, “If you go to Manchuria, you will grow potatoes as big as a baby’s head” as an eighty five year old Korean Chinese lady put it to me in Yanbian.⁶ In the mountainous northern part of the Korean peninsula bordering China, there was a lack of farming land. In addition, the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula had worsened poverty, leading Koreans to join the intense flow of migration to China.

Despite the variation of border crossing history, <*The Common Sense of Korean Chinese History*>, a small text-book-like history book written by Yanbian Korean Chinese historians, sums up Korean Chinese migration history through six phases. First, it was the late Ming and the early Qing era from 1620 to 1766. Koreans were subject to the Qing dynasty as war slaves.

⁴ <*Common Sense of Korean Chinese History*>, <*The Traces of Korean Chinese*>, <*One Hundred Years of Korean Chinese History*>, <*Jilin Korean Chinese*>, and multiple collections of local histories written by local historians (Yanji, Longjing, Tumen, Hualong, Wangqing, Hunchun). All were written in Korean, and published in Yanbian.

⁵ The Qing government did not allow Chinese to live in what is now Northeast China because it was the birthplace of their dynasty, their “holy land.” During the late 19th century, Koreans began sneaking across the Tumen River to farm, while Russians were aggressively moving south into Manchuria. Around 1880 the Qing government lifted the prohibition and started allowing Chinese farmers into Northeast China, distributing farming land at low prices and offering tax benefits.

⁶ A novel, <*Bugando*> written by An Sukil, a Korean writer, deals with Korean Chinese farmers’ border-crossing and settlement stories. In this novel, China is described as more prosperous than Chosun. Yet Koreans had to face issues of cultural assimilation and ethnic discrimination (see also Park 2005).

Second, it was the late Qing period from 1677 to 1881, which was right before the prohibition of the entry of the holy land was lifted. Koreans sneaked cross the Tumen River and cultivated land in China. Third, it was from 1882 and 1910, the phase that the Qing government encouraged Han Chinese and Koreans to move to northeast China to protect their land from Russia moving to the South. Fourth, it was from 1911 to 1920, which was free migration era. Koreans were moving to China escaping the Japanese occupation and aggravated poverty under Japan. Fifth, It was from 1921 to 1931, right before the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. China forced Korean Chinese to change their citizenship to Chinese because China was in competition with Japanese that considered Korean as their citizens. Sixth, it was from 1931 to 1945, which was the era when Japan forced Koreans to move to China as a means of territorial occupation. Most Korean Chinese and Korean historians consider the Korean Chinese migration began from the third phase (from 1882), after the Qing lifted the prohibition of entry of the holy land.

In fact, the distinction of migration phase and the moment of settlement is a politically sensitive issue because the settlement history could imply the affiliation of Korean Chinese to China in terms of ethnicity, nationality, and territoriality; how deeply and how long this migrant ethnic minority group has claimed the association with the land of China. Although Yanbian—which used to be called “*gando*”(an island between China and Chosun)—is clearly Chinese territory now, it has historically been the subject of disputes between China and Korea⁷⁸(Park

⁷⁸ Until the late 19th Century, the Qing and Chosun governments had disputed the territory of Kando, the former name of Yanbian. As a result of the Qing’s defeat in the Qing- Japan War, Japan took the right to build railroads in the southern part of Manchuria while yielding the territory of Kando to the Qing government. Kando's status as part of Chinese territory was formalized in the “Kando treaty” of 1909. (Lim 2002; Park 2005)

2005). Even after the territorial settlement in 1909, the status of Yanbian's Korean migrants, who were mostly farmers from the Korean peninsula, remained unclear—at various times they were considered citizens of China, Korea, and even Japan, occupier of Northeast China (Manchuria) from 1937 to 1945.⁹ This border crossing continued until Korea (the colonial *Chosun*) won independence from Japan in 1945. As the new China was established in 1949, Korean Chinese actively supported the Chinese communist party, and subsequently Korean Chinese became citizens of China as members of an officially recognized ethnic minority group (Lee 1998; Lim 2002). Some Koreans moved back to Korea following national independence while some remained in China, becoming settled farmers and Chinese nationals. Some Koreans were prevented from returning to Korea by the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Today two million Korean Chinese—an officially recognized Korean ethnic group with Chinese nationality—are descendants of these settlers who crossed the Tumen River with “empty hands,” and reclaimed the wasteland of what is now Yanbian. I heard Korean Chinese in their seventies and eighties speak of the border crossings in their family histories, but most of them do not maintain active relationships with distant relatives in North Korea, where most Yanbian Korean Chinese moved from, and which is one of the most impoverished states in the world today.

The settler history of Yanbian also portrays an ethnic distinction between Han and Korean Chinese. On a short trip to the countryside, I often heard the ethnic comparison from my Korean Chinese companies, “Korean Chinese built their houses with shabby bush clover fences while Han Chinese built and rebuilt brick fences every year, expanding their territory

⁹ When Japan occupied Chosun in 1909, Chosun was deprived of its sovereignty and diplomatic rights, and Koreans under Japanese control became Japanese citizens. However, in truth Japan did not acknowledge the full status of Koreans, adding the distinction of “Chosun” to their citizenship. During the colonial period, Koreans’ citizenship status was ambiguous, especially in Manchuria until 1945, when Chosun became independent from Japan.

little by little.” This orally transmitted “ethnic tale” tells how Korean Chinese as migrant settlers seemed always to be ready to *leave* without developing an attachment to where they lived whereas Han Chinese planned not to move, staying put for longer periods. Many Korean Chinese, in particular, those over 80 years old, recounted how they moved continuously from one place to another in pursuit of better and more land, relying on kinship networks and friendship ties across Northeast China. Until Japan retreated from Manchuria in 1945, Yanbian was a construct where ethnic tensions between Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese were suppressed under the Manchukuo regime (Park 2005).

After the Japanese left Yanbian as a result of their defeat in World War II and China established itself anew in 1949, the Korean settlers became “Chinese” in terms of nationality and social identity. The “Chinese-ness” of Korean Chinese is especially important to Korean Chinese Communist Party members, who emphasize their contribution to the war of liberation against Japan and the Guomindang, and their deep engagement in the socialist revolution. In fact, Korean Chinese devotion to the party enabled Yanbian to complete the class revolution and the redistribution of land by 1948, which was earlier than other areas of China. The Chinese government gave credit to the Korean Chinese as a major revolutionary group by designating Yanbian as an ethnic autonomous zone in 1952. Since then, Korean Chinese have become official civic members of Communist China rather than floating and temporary migrant farmers from the Korean peninsula.

However, even after Korean Chinese became recognized as an ethnic minority group with Chinese nationality, their ethnic identity seemed to supersede their (official) national identity. I heard from Communist Party members in their eighties about their emotional and national attachment to Korea in the 1950s. For example, when filling out official documents

and forms related to the registration of their houses, ethnic Koreans entered North Korea as their “original” address or “birth” place. They read, wrote, and sang in Korean. Surrounded by other Korean Chinese, they had no need to be able to speak Chinese in their everyday life.

Even though Han Chinese lived and worked in Yanbian, the main language was Korean in official meetings, while “small translation”(xiaofanyi in Chinese) from Korean to Chinese was provided for Han Chinese in a low voice. An old Communist Party member recalls Yanbian in that era as an “all Korean Chinese world (*chosunjok sesang* in Korean)” Yet things changed dramatically beginning in the late 1950s. The “national identity education program” (*Zuguoquan Jiaoyu*) launched in 1958, emphasizing the idea that Korean Chinese were citizens of China and requiring Korean Chinese to break off their national ties to the two Koreas—both North and South. Under this intensive education, Korean Chinese were taught that China was their only home country, and reassured that they were definitely and without exception welcome members of the Chinese nation.

The Cultural Revolution was a particularly harsh period for Korean Chinese, as they became subject to random and continuous purges and persecutions. Their ethnicity, or more precisely, their ethnic affinity to North and South Korea came into play in the political tumult. Since Kim Il Sung, the leader of North Korea at the time, criticized the brutal aspects of the Cultural Revolution, criticism which ignited the fury of Mao,¹⁰ the reciprocal relationship between the neighboring socialist states was seriously fraying. During this time, culture and discourse that could be considered “ethnic” was strictly prohibited as a betrayal of the state of

¹⁰ Kim Il Sung, the founder of North Korea, had been an active member of the Chosun Communist Party. Yanbian was the main domain for his socialist revolutionary activities under Japanese imperialism. When Yanbian was designated as the autonomous prefecture in 1952, North Korea became an important supporter of Korean Chinese by exchanging teachers and offering textbooks from North Korea. This socialist reciprocity continued until Kim Il Sung criticized Mao’s socialism as “revisionism.” His critique caused considerable trouble for Korean Chinese during the Cultural Revolution (Lim 2005).

China. Any possible tie to the two Koreas—familial, economic, and political—could provide a cause for political persecution. Kinship ties to North Korea were treated with suspicion, given the proximity of Korean Chinese to the North Korean border. Ties to South Korea—the capitalist enemy—were used as critical evidence for accusations that an individual was a “baby of capitalism (*jabonjuuisaggi* in Korean).” Many Korean Chinese were put to death as political scapegoats, caught up in unfair accusations and false reports. The overall turmoil left a deep scar across the whole ethnic community of Korean Chinese until the 1980s, as many of the older generation of Korean Chinese testified to me with their long unspeakable traumatic wound (chapter 5).

In order to avoid the emotional, political, and physical trauma, Korean Chinese had to prove their faith to China as a home country, and their full identity as Chinese by de-emphasizing their ethnicity. Korean Chinese who underwent the Cultural Revolution said that they had to eradicate their “ethnic color,” by prohibiting ethnic songs and dances, and were not allowed to speak freely about anything related to their Korean ethnicity in public space. Politically speaking, Korean Chinese had to avoid any association with North or South Korea. People tried to defend themselves from arbitrary political persecution by making overt declarations that they were “anti-capitalist” or “anti-South Korea,” or by pledging allegiance to China. The period from the late 1950s to the late 1970s was culturally sterile and politically brutal for Korean Chinese. After the chaotic age of the Cultural Revolution eventually ended in the late 1970s, Yanbian ushered in a new phase of economic reform and an open economy, like other regions of China. In this new era, multiple fashions, new desires, new flows, and new forms of border crossing have continuously swept Yanbian in a form of “*wind*” such North Korean wind and Soviet Wind, the fashion that I will elaborate in the following section.

And by the early 1990s, the South Korean wind finally reached Yanbian as the diplomatic normalization was established between China and South Korea.

1.1.2 Border Geography: On the Ethnic Margin

As I lay out in the beginning of the chapter, the idea of Yanbian as an “ethnic minority” and “border” zone is lingered in everyday life. Yanbian *zhou*, the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture, is a district composed of six cities: Yanji (the capital), Antu, Helong, Longjing, Tumen, and Wangqing. The total population of the Yanbian Zhou is around two million; ethnic Koreans comprise 35% of the population, and Han Chinese 65% approximately. Besides ethnic Koreans and Han Chinese, a small number of other ethnic minority groups also live in Yanbian including *Manzu* and *Menguzu*. Out of these six cities, the city of Yanji as a capital of the prefecture has demonstrated a growth of population for the last twenty years along with the rapid urbanization and economic development, now reaching more than half a million people. Despite being the Korean Chinese ethnic autonomous prefecture, Yanbian seems to have a majority Han Chinese population; and Chinese language is essential to get by in everyday life. And yet, a lot of Korean Chinese testified that the increasing Han Chinese population and emerging necessity of Chinese language are recent phenomena after Korean Chinese started moving to Korea to make money and Han Chinese came to replace the gap—as a result of the *Korean Wind* (chapter 2).

Despite the growing dominance of “Chinese-ness,” Yanbian has still presented a strong ethnic characteristic through a series of Korean ethnic organizations; the Zhou government, Yanbian University, Yanbian Newspaper, Yanbian People Publishing Company and Yanbian broadcasting—TV and Radio. Since Yanbian was designated as the prefecture of ethnic autonomous zone in 1952, these organizations have been designed to speak and write

in Korean language as the first language.¹¹ In the streets, signs must be written bilingually—Korean coming first and Chinese next. Sometimes, we can find some Han Chinese who can speak fluent Korean although it is a rare case. The “great” ethnic minority policy is believed to enable Korean Chinese to maintain ethnic identity and ethnic harmony along with Han Chinese and other ethnic minorities in China without being assimilated into Han centered Chinese culture. Thanks to the policy, in addition, Korean Chinese think that they have lived in China, not as “ethnic other” under “internal orientalism”(Schein 2000) or “civilizing project”(Harrel 1995), but as a proud member of communist China, the ethnic group who is the most highly educated and civilized (*mofan minzhu* in Chinese, *mobum minjok* in Korean), even compared to Han Chinese after they migrated from the Korean peninsula. In Yanbian, it is common to hear about the celebration of the ethnic policy in an academic conference as well as in an ordinary conversation with Korean Chinese (see chapter 5).

Of identity markers that demonstrate ethnic identity, the Korean language is construed as the most critical element in proving who they are—as Korean Chinese. The majority of Korean Chinese children choose to go to Korean ethnic schools and get educated there in Korean as their native language.¹² The Korean language that Korean Chinese speak has a regional accent of Yanbian, the accent similar to the northern part of contemporary North Korea—*Hamkyunbukdo*—where most ancestors of Yanbian Korean Chinese moved from a

¹¹ The Yanbian Korean Chinese Prefecture used to consider the dialect of Pyungyang as a standard of Korean language until South Korean media has become common to watch through satellite in the 2000 in Yanbian. The Korean language we hear from Yanbian TV or Radio station is not exactly Pyungyang nor Seoul. But in everyday life, a lot of Yanbian Korean Chinese speak the Hamkyungbookdo accent although there are minor variation and difference in speaking.

¹² The ethnic education has been considered as a default choice amongst Korean Chinese in order to maintain ethnic identity. And yet, there is a new fashion for Korean Chinese parents to send their children to Han Chinese school in order for their children to speak fluent Chinese—unlike themselves. Han Chinese schools have a limited portion for Korean Chinese. The competition to get into Han Chinese school is high. The “extra” money is required if the child do not go through the official entrance competition.

century ago. When speaking Chinese language, most Yanbian Korean Chinese speak in a distinct accent. Therefore, in Yanbian, there is a natural way of recognizing Korean Chinese from Han Chinese.

Within China, Yanji is the largest and the most densely populated city by Korean Chinese. Since Koreans first moved from the Korean peninsula to Yanbian from the late 19th century, Yanbian has been built as the ethnic comfort zone for Korean Chinese. Many Korean Chinese, in particular, farmers or older generations, said that they neither needed to speak Chinese nor to deal with Han Chinese since the ethnic line divided the living space and social network. For the occasion of having to interact with Han Chinese and speak Chinese language, I sometimes saw Korean Chinese farmers or workers express their annoyances and discomforts. The lack of fluency in Chinese has become a definite hindrance to live in a city like Yanji—where the influx of Han Chinese population has rapidly increased (chapter 2). But Korean Chinese could avoid the overlapped space with Han Chinese and try to find a way out if they want to, because Yanbian, as the autonomous prefecture is still favorable to Korean Chinese and Korean ethnicity and language is dominant in daily life. Thus, the lack of Chinese is not necessarily a shame or an impossible condition to live in Yanbian.

Along with the ethnic characteristic, the border location is another critical factor in shaping the landscape of Yanbian. In Yanbian, the trip to the border is an essential route for tourists. When I first visited Yanbian in 2006, a Korean Chinese friend of mine, Sun—who I met through the church in Seoul—took me to the border patrol zone where the Chinese military stood against North Korea. She believed that this scene was the most unique characteristic of Yanbian. She also said it was Yanbian's most popular tourist spot. Border patrols range along the Tumen River, looking to repel North Korean runaways. Some parts of

the river are deep and wide while some parts are shallower and easier to cross. Thus, border control is stricter in some places than others. A simple line on the bridge connecting China and North Korea indicated the border. But the simple line implies both structure and symbol of a state's security and sovereignty (Donna & Wilson 1999) in that it signifies not only the domain of the Chinese state, but also the prohibition on crossing into or from North Korea. Although the border control that I observed on the spot looked fairly tight, many tourists were enjoying themselves, taking pictures of the borderline and the border patrol. It was not a scene solely of anxiety or nervousness. Rather, the border looked like a nice "theme park," with North Korea as backdrop. The long Tumen River, meandering as a natural and territorial border between the two countries, also provided a nice walking trail for tourists. The trail allowed tourists to see the contrasting mountain views; Chinese mountains were full of trees whereas North Korean mountains were naked because the trees had been cut down to make room for cultivation in the face of long food shortages. While looking at the stark contrasting mountains, Sun also said, "North Korean is that much in poverty whereas we are this much better off" as many other Korean Chinese have mentioned to me. In this manner, the border zone, as a touristic spot, enables tourists to imagine the possible misery and poverty of North Korea across the Tumen River. The sharp borderline separating the two countries does not seem to be a blurred borderland that overlaps multiple cultures and hybrid identity (Gupta & Ferguson 1997) or "culture + culture" as fusion of registers (Hannertz 1997). Rather it appears as a frozen zone where cultural production and meaning-making processes have paused for a long time.

While exploring in Yanbian—through hiking and conducting field research, I took several trips to different border zones. They left quite different impressions depending on

where we looked out over the Tumen River and which North Korean border town we were facing across the river. Of the hiking members that I introduced at the beginning of this chapter, I had a chance to be guided by Cadre Yang to a border city, Yuejing, which used to have a prosperous pulp factory and highly productive rice farming. Cadre Yang was from this town, and he explained the history of the town in addition to his own personal story. Yuejing's adjacency to North Korea permitted much traffic through the city between the two countries until the Chinese government acted to strongly bar the flow of North Korean runaways in the early 2000s. The development of the city can be traced back to the colonial period of Japanese imperialism. Yuejing was built as a bridging point between the Korean peninsula and China (Manchuria at the time), having a train station that connected to other Northeast Chinese cities. The location as a major traffic point attracted Japan to build infrastructure—electricity, roads, water, and so forth—in order to run factories and channel goods and people from southern Manchuria to northeast China and Russia. In addition, proximity to the northern part of Korea (contemporary North Korea), where people suffered from the lack of farming land and aggravated impoverishment under Japanese occupation, attracted poor Korean farmers across the river in search of land. The majority of the Yuejing population is now composed of ethnic Koreans. While exploring the downtown of the city along with several surrounding farming towns, I met several Han Chinese farmers who spoke fluent Korean in a Yanbian accent. Cadre Yang, who accompanied me, jokingly said, “They (Han Chinese) have been *assimilated* to Koreans for ethnic harmony.” We laughed in an agreement of the bizarre dynamic occurring in the ethnic autonomous zone. “As we have lived in the same town for years, Han Chinese become like Korean Chinese, doing the rice farming¹³ as good as Korean Chinese and eating *kimchi* as often as Korean Chinese.”

¹³ Rice farming characterizes Korean Chinese culture in Northeast China. Due to Chinese farmers being barred

In Yuejing, the Tumen River is a key component of the border landscape, a constant reminder that we are right at the border with North Korea. Given the extreme isolation of North Korea from the external world, its eerie politics and harsh treatment of its people, Yuejing has become a popular spot for curious tourists, from South Korea as well as other Chinese regions, to peer through telescopes at neighboring North Korean towns, hoping to witness the barrenness and poverty of North Korea from afar. Cadre Yang also took me to a telescope spot on a nearby mountain. In fact, the telescoping of North Korea is sort of a common ritual on visits to all the border towns of Yanbian. On each occasion, my Korean Chinese companions told me that they had distantly related families back in North Korea but had lost contact with them. Despite the proximity, the kinship relationships between Korean Chinese and North Korea seemed to have quickly worn thin, especially since the Cultural Revolution. The Korean Chinese tended to emphasize the great disparity between North Koreans and Korean Chinese in terms of personality and national culture, largely constituted by economic differences between the two countries. Cadre Yang also tried to convince me that there was a sharp contrast between the Chinese and North Korean landscapes and cityscapes. He was right. On the North Korean side, dilapidated factories looked dreary and few people were seen in the street. Cadre Yang also told me that Korean Chinese in border towns have suffered from robberies and home invasions by desperate North Korean runaways. Sympathy toward poor North Koreans has notably lessened in recent years. The border patrol has become stricter. The Tumen River that Korean Chinese ancestors crossed

from Northeast China in order to protect the Qing's holy land, most of the land there remained barren and uncultivated. Korean farmers started reclaiming this abandoned land and transforming it into rice fields. Rice farming requires special skills and weather condition, and Korean farmers tended not to transfer their expertise to Chinese rivals. Despite the illegal residence of the Koreans, most Chinese landowners did not evict them, instead taking advantage of their high-profit rice farming and their relatively cheap labor (Park 2005:Lim 2002).

over in pursuit of farming lands has become another barrier that North Koreans have to surmount to escape starvation. The border's meaning shifts in different contexts and under different stresses, but its geography remains.

1.2 New *Winds*

Yanbian's urbanization began alongside the end of the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution since Deng Xiaoping announced the economic reform and open economy in December 1978. This epochal proclamation included three stages of development; 1) solving the eating problem (温饱 *wenbao*) from 1980 to 1990, 2) distribution of the decent affluence (小康 *xiaokang*) from 1990 to 2000, and finally, 3) the achievement of socialist market economy until the mid-twenty first century. Pragmatism was vital to this economic reform, expressing "it does not matter whether it is black or white cat as long as it catches a mouse." (黑白猫论). It also encouraged some groups of people to become richer prior to some other group (选富论), admitting the market competition and consequential social inequality as an inevitable rite of passage. Deng announced this declaration in 1978 and promoted Chinese people to practice market activity. Yet, it took a while for the reform policy to reach and be put into practice in everyday life of Yanbian. In the early 1980s people in Yanbian were still confused about what it meant to be the "market economy" and "property-making." It was because "privatization" or "selling" was still forbidden while, at the same time, these activities were secretly but gradually more widespread.¹⁴ Due to the geographical marginality as an ethnic enclave, as I illustrate above, Yanbian's development has been overlooked or deferred by the central

¹⁴ In the early 1990s, the former Soviet countries had the same reaction to the "market." The long forbidden market activities made people shameful of doing "immoral" activities (selling and making profits), while at the same time, they became "proud" of individual autonomy and rapid economic betterment through the market activities. The contradictory response to the "market" has been ethnographically documented in *Markets & Moralities: Ethnographies of Postsocialism* (Mandel and Humphrey 2002).

government. Yet, as Yanbian Korean Chinese experienced the rise of market over time, they testified the role of market in helping them “open” the eyes through contacting with external “world” and long-distance business trips to larger Chinese cities. The interaction with the “world” by going out soon became a fashion that created a certain flow of mobility and circulation—things, people and habits.

While I stayed in Yanbian, I witnessed the ambiguous periodization that characterizes the “transition”¹⁵ along with the economic reform, following the cycle of emergence and demise of a collective fashion and yearning for something new; as people called it, “*wind*.” As I earlier introduced in the Introduction, *wind* has multiple connotations in this context: it continues to move and change the direction without notice; it changes the airflow; it is temporary but influential if it is strong. The metaphorical use of *wind*, which sometimes results in turbulence, is to describe the passion and fashion that has shaped and reshaped the direction of mobility and the method to care for the future amongst Yanbian Korean Chinese. In what follows, I trace the trajectory of urbanization intersected with Korean Chinese mobility—*Market wind*, *North Korea Wind*, *Soviet Wind*, and *Korean Wind*. Even with the *Winds* the ethnic enclave remained fairly intact until the Korean wind blew to Yanbian from the early 1990s.

1.2.1 *Wind I*: The Rise of Market

From the early 1980s, the farming land was redistributed on the basis of the family number and the farming products came to belong to individual families, no more to the

¹⁵ As Karl Polany suggested in *The Great Transformation*(1944(2001)), the economy has never been purely economic; it is always a political and cultural economy. Burawoy and Verdery also point out the transitional economy has brought about the cultural and political transformation. Transition is a process, not a unilinear one of moving from one stage to the next but a combined and uneven ones having multiple trajectories (1999:14). Yanbian’s economic transition, in particular, during the early stage of the economic reform, has reshaped the mind, behavior, and perspectives of the people in the region; Korean Chinese, in particular, reconstituted themselves as transnational subjects along with their homelands—North Korea and South Korea.

collective unit. This new system of production and distribution encouraged farmers to increase their productivity and start selling the surplus product to the market if there was surplus left. The idea of profit making rapidly permeated to urbanites and the practice of selling had the ethnic margin gradually connected to the external “world.” While researching on the history of market in Yanbian, I happened to meet Mr. Hong in a summer picnic organized by *the association of the old (laoren xiehui)*. The Association has collective activities on a regular basis, such as dancing, singing, and hiking, for the Korean Chinese retirees who are mostly older than sixty years old. At this picnic, I met several former business people who did *xiahai* (plunging into the ocean) in the late 1980s and early 1990, as precursors to lead their own business for the economic profit. Of these, Mr. Hong was considered a successful businessman in the wake of economic reform and open economy. I continued to carry a conversation with him, mainly asking about how he started and managed his business. He told me about his swift reaction to the economic reform, resulting in economic betterment over others in a short period of the time.

Mr. Hong in his late sixties used to work for the post office, living in Yanji. From the early 1980s, he began to see some of his neighbors and other farmers selling simple things—tofu, sunflower seeds, tobacco, and so forth—on the street and making some profit, which turned out to bring more income than their regular salaries. This surreptitious activity made Mr. Hong interested in selling something, but he was not sure what item he would have to sell. One day, a good idea occurred to him. Hong’s wife was a factory worker, but she was especially good at making *mahua* (麻花 snack in a twisted shape). Her friends always liked what she made and envied her talent. His wife and himself mutually agreed with each other and soon started selling *mahua* as their secondary job. They set up a stand located on the corner of

street, where many people passed by. Since *Mahua* was considered a kind of morning food, the Hong couple had to get up at 3am to prepare for a daily business. They started selling at 6am. But the prepared *mahua* was all sold out by 7am. Mr. Hong went to the post office for his regular job after this busy morning business. As the business quickly picked up beyond their expectation, they had to prepare more ingredients for more sales, by getting up at 2am. Mr. Hong said, “we were physically tired, but this extra cash income made us forget about the exhaustion. It was incomparable to our combined incomes—more than four times.” However, he heard, one day, the local government would prohibit street vendors from doing businesses for the purpose of city landscape.

The Hong couple was not worried much because they were not the only vendor. People—both Han and Korean Chinese—still sold things regardless of the ban of the local government. As the regulation could not stop these rapidly increasing vendors day by day, the local government eventually had to decide to establish an “official market.” The government was acting like a landlord by selling or renting booths to individual sellers. To begin with, Hong’s couple got a rented booth within the new market. Soon later, their successful business allowed them to buy a booth for the restaurant. They became the owners of a restaurant—the *laoban*. The opening of official market was a historical event, which dramatically transformed the perspective of money, profit, market, and “the world.” In 1985, as “the Yanji West market”(西市场 *xishichang*), opened as the first and largest market in Yanbian, smaller cities—Longjing, Tumen, and Helong—also came to have their public markets that allowed sellers to have their own business as *laoban* within the markets. Hong’s story is one of numerous examples that could help us sense the initial landscape of market and mood of privatization



Photo 2. The Yanji West Market. By June Hee Kwon (2009)

in Yanbian. He found a good niche market by capitalizing on the talent of his wife. He also realized the harder he worked, the more money he could make in contrast to the collective farm and rigid socialist production system. The excitement about the emerging market and the derived benefit and profit was rapidly spread out and widely shared. Whenever I interviewed with current business people and government officers in their fifties or older, including the former business people I met at the picnic, they recollected the 1980s as the time full of new energy, new experience, and new thought in the wake of market. This was an eye-opening moment for Korean Chinese who used to live in an insular ethnic zone.

The eye opening experiences were more prominent in business that required long distance trips. While Mr. Hong's restaurant business was localized without need of travel, those who engaged in trading business had to take multiple trips to buy products in larger

cities. Before starting the business, these traders had never left this ethnic enclave in their life. At the kernel of this memory, when I talked to peddlers, lie the fear and excitement about the first long distance trip to other Chinese cities to buy stuff to sell for their business. Given the marginalized location of Yanbian, peddlers (采购员 *caigouyuan*) had to go to larger cities in order to buy new products, carry them back to Yanbian and sell them in their stores. They had to repeat this cycle because Yanbian did not have a big market to meet the high demand on product consumption. The peddlers took trains to closer cities in Northeast China, such as to Shenyang or Harbin. It was a day or two day trip. But, when they took longer trips to more commercialized southern cities like Shanghai or Guangzhou, it took three days only to reach there. The peddlers remember these business trips were long, exhausting, and risky. Since this peddling was transacted only with cash, the peddlers were known to carry a large amount of cash with them. The cash was always the target of robbers. Danger lurked in the train all the time. In order to protect themselves from the risk of being attacked by these random robbers and brighten up the dull and long trip, the peddlers took business trip in a group with three or four other peddlers. Responding to continuous and multiple business trips, one of Korean Chinese ladies, a current seller at the West Market of Yanji, who I met at the picnic, said to me, “Whenever I took a trip, I felt my eyes were open to the bigger world and newer things” and “I came to learn how to do the business in “*real*” China with “*real*” Chinese.”

The rise of market enabled to circulate not only things but also transform people in a new fashion.¹⁶ The business trip brought a dual impact. It helped Korean Chinese living in a

¹⁶ In fact, the peddlers I happened to meet were predominantly females. And, when we go to the Yanji West Market (*Xishichang*), most laobans are female. In Yanbian, there is a common saying, “there is no place where Korean Chinese do not go,” and in more gender specific, “the first group to start taking a business trip was those who went to sell *Kimchi* to *Han Cave* (Han Chinese populated areas meaning most of Chinese cities).” A lot of cases, majority of these female peddlers did not speak Chinese at all when having business with Han Chinese. All business was a series of learning process—not only Chinese language, but also a Chinese way of doing business.

parochial ethnic enclave to “open” their eyes to the new world while, at the same time, the trip made them realize their ethnic minority-ness—who speak no Chinese and have no knowledge about “real” China and Chinese culture (Chapter2). Feeling the ethnic discomfort, the “pure” ethnic subjects came to face with the external world, *waidi*, in the wake of market, extending the geographical imagination and the scope of actual mobility, not only to Chinese large cities, but also to North Korea and Soviet Union for transnational businesses. In the wake of the initiation of market, North Korea came to the fore as the first transnational business partner due to the geographical proximity, linguistic similarity, and kinship connectivity.

1.2.2 *Wind 2: North Korean Wind*

From the mid-1980s, the peddling was expanded to North Korea and later, to the Soviet Union. I often heard about small and large business experience to North Korea from Korean Chinese migrant workers who I met both in Korea and in Yanbian. The frequent and repetitive story telling might evidence the wide practice of the business amongst Korean Chinese in the mid-1980s. Despite the geographical adjacency between Yanbian and North Korea, the business relationship had been limited by political circumstances for decades. Even though China and North Korea had been on the reciprocal terms as neighboring socialist states, the diplomatic relationship was seriously hostile during the Cultural Revolution because Kim Il-sung, the leader of North Korea back then, was critical of the harsh political gesture of Mao. Kim’s critique made Mao furious and resulted in political antagonism between two countries. In particular, Korean Chinese were treated as possible runaways to North Korea (ancestors’ homeland) and as political betrayers who would abandon China (their official home country). Any possible tie related to North Korea—familial, economic, and political—was a condition for political persecution. In order to avoid the emotional, political, and

physical traumatic events fraught with politics, Korean Chinese had to prove how faithful they were to China, a home country, and how fully they became Chinese by de-coloring their ethnic identity as “full” Chinese (highlighted in Chapter 5). Yet, as the political tension was gradually eased and the diplomatic relationship was recovered from the mid-1980s, Korean Chinese were allowed to visit their families back in North Korea with less political burden. On the way, some Korean Chinese began to carry Chinese industrial products to exchange with the North Korean seafood, which was known to have a high quality. Or, some Korean Chinese began to work like peddlers for the big margin of the business, staying in North Korea for several days or weeks.¹⁷

One of Korean Chinese migrant workers who I met in Seoul told me about her trading experience in North Korea. She used to work in a furniture factory in Yanbian. But as the factory showed a gradual decline, she started her own business such as selling fruits in the market. In addition, she considered going to North Korea a source for the extra income in the late 1980s. She said, “

I carried as much stuff as I could all the way to North Korea—as heavy as my back and arms were broken. Once I got there, I had to rely on a North Korean mediator who guided me to a large market that opened on a regular basis—such as once a week. I put my products on the market. There were a lot of thieves in the market. I got stolen once too. It was very stressful to be alert all the time. Sometimes, I just passed the products to the mediator and exchanged seafood on the right spot. The money that I could earn from the selling (exchanging) was not bad, which was better than several months of salary given by my factory.

¹⁷ Various Korean Chinese informants testified about “the advanced” culture of North Korea influenced by Korean Japanese who returned from Japan to North Korea. From the late 1950s to the early 1960, North Korea promoted the “returning home” program to attract Koreans in Japan who underwent harsh ethnic discrimination in Japan. This repatriate program was aimed to tighten the relationship between North Korea and Koreans in Japan, those Koreans who might work as a channel to induce “advanced” culture and modernized things from Japan to North Korea. The Japanese products were sold and exported to China through Korean Chinese peddlers. As a result, Yanbian was one of the first places in China to enjoy the color TVs, audio recorder, and video player that were imported from Japan according to informants in Yanbian. Morris-Suzuki developed the narrative related to the repatriate Koreans from Japan to North Korea in *Exodus to North Korea* (2007).

However, the stories I was told showed that the peddling to North Korea did not last long. Even though it became a popular extra source of income among farmers and factory workers, it had several limits in itself. First, the profit margin could not increase because the amount of products that these peddlers could carry to North Korea was limited in each trip. Given the public transportation was not reliable to get to North Korea crossing the border, the (Korean) Chinese peddlers had to rely on personal vehicles on the way to North Korea by paying a certain amount of money for drivers. The peddlers knew that the more they carried, the more they could sell and earn, because there was always high demand on Chinese products in North Korea. Peddlers, who were individuals and not organized sellers, could not change the small scaled-business style and thus, could not amass capital. They realized they were unable to turn the trading into a big business. Most of all, since Korean Chinese were unfamiliar with the market situation of North Korea, they had to rely on North Korean mediators. Some distantly related North Korean relatives or newly made North Korean business partners often turned out to be traitors and cheaters. Sometimes, North Koreans thieves robbed Korean Chinese peddlers. In addition, since the market restriction was too tight and fluctuating—where and when to sell what to whom—in North Korea, it was not free for Korean Chinese to do the business in North Korea as if they were lost and frustrated in an old homeland. Under the special market condition with high risk and low trust, Korean Chinese sometimes went bankrupt although their business had showed quite of success for some period of the time. The poor and unpredictable market condition had quickly exhausted Korean Chinese peddlers and the *North Korea wind* was flagging as the *Soviet wind* was blown to Yanbian in the late 1980s.

1.2.3 *Wind 3: The Soviet Wind*

As the Soviet Union ended in 1991, many Chinese left for the former Soviet areas in order to seize the new market opportunity by introducing Chinese industrial products. In stark contrast to the small scale and short period barter type trading with North Korea, the business with Russian¹⁸ market was more organized, merchandised and high-profit making oriented. Since the Soviet industry was developed with a focus on heavy industry under the socialist regime, the industrial product—so called, the light industry—was always short in Russia. By targeting this niche market, some Korean Chinese also engaged in the business, taking long trips to Moscow or Ukraine, but the majority of Korean Chinese dealers left for the east part of Russia because it closely faced with Northeast China—in particular, eastern Part of Jilin and Heilongjiang. The items for sale were diverse, but these merchants mostly concentrated on selling clothes and shoes, which were on high demand in Russia.¹⁹ These merchants came to deal with much larger portion of products in the Russia market, staying for years, which was a much longer period of the time compared to the business in North Korea.

In fact, majority of those who did have experience as peddlers to North Korea went to Russia for business, too. When I heard about the long distance business trips to Russia from former Korean Chinese merchants, I found that one of intriguing points of the business in Russia is the way that the business was organized for self-protection and profit-maximization. Despite the high margin, Russia was known to be an extremely dangerous place to do business as expressed in a saying, “when people went to Russia for business, they almost

¹⁸ In Yanbian, people frequently alternate Russia with the Soviet Union in their use. Here, I use Russia because the area where Korean Chinese had business is mostly the current Russia territory. Yet, when people refer the “wind,” only the “Soviet” Wind (*soryun baram*) is used.

¹⁹ Even now, it is easy to see Russian merchants or tourists shopping in Yanbian, in particular, in a city called, Hunchun, a city that borders with Far East part of Russia.

put their life out there.” In fact, Russian gangsters targeted Chinese merchants because Chinese were good at business and believed to carry a lot of cash with them. Regardless of high risk, however, the high margin seemed to overshadow the fear and anxiety for the trip to Russia, which kept the *Soviet wind* blowing throughout Yanbian from the late 1980s to the early 1990s.

The *Soviet wind* seemed to dovetail with the economic reform and open economy in China. Sometimes, the government work unit encouraged workers to go to Russia to make money by providing official vacation for the trip. It was implicit but institutionalized support from the work units. Mr. Kim Hakman in his early seventies, who used to be a vice mayor of one of cities in Yanbian, recalled the *Soviet Wind* as following:

When the Soviet collapsed in 1991, they needed a lot of products. At that time, we, Korean Chinese, thought that it was a great opportunity to make money. Thus, in our *work unit*, we encouraged our workers to have temporary vacation and do whatever they could make money. They were allowed to return to the work unit in a couple of years after making decent money. Since I was fairly high ranked in a city government, I could not stay away and do business. But, I have been to the Soviet [Union] a couple of times in 1991. I was very impressed with their higher level of “civilization” and development compared to China at that time. But, doing business in the Soviet was extremely dangerous. My brother in law, my wife’s brother, went to the Soviet and made a lot of money there. But, Russian gangsters stabbed him with knife. He was almost killed. Even with the risk, people went to the Soviet until the early 1990s because the return was big.

In response to the high risk, the merchants had to develop new methods to protect themselves. Not only Mr. Kim, but also other former merchants to Russia detailed the special way: the merchants made a team for the business while they stayed in Russia. The business team was organized between friends before they left for Russia. But, sometimes, they formed a team with strangers after they got to Russia—that was for a mutual win-win outcome. More importantly, these merchants did fake marriages in order to look as if they were a family that shows the merchant is not alone, having a trustworthy companion. Many former merchants

said that before they left for Russia or they began the business in Russia, the couple had a wedding ceremony. But the “couples” were not supposed to ask about the personal information including real names. The merchants lived as a new person throughout the promised period of the business in Russia. From stories told by the former merchants, I noticed there was a type of division of labor by gender. Once the real business started, women tend to take care of the store while men were in charge of purchasing products from China and carrying them to Russia. In order to take care of the security issue, sometimes, two couples were jointed as business partners. The “married” merchants—“bride and groom”—lived together as if they were a real couple in quest for the common goal and safety. Sometimes, they developed the feelings for each other and had actual love affairs. But, the “official” contract was that they kept the fake couple relationship between themselves, and would not meet again after they returned to China. Despite the “contract,” the *Soviet wind* posed a challenge about the normative couple and family relationship to Korean Chinese merchants with the embedded practice of “fake coupling” as a rite of passage. It was performed for the purpose of self-protection and business interest but it has also evolved as a natural way of life, which led to actual affair and increase of divorce in Yanbian (see chapter 3).

When I was collecting the memories related to the *Soviet Wind* from various former Korean Chinese merchants, I could sense the anxiety and excitement of informants in recalling the time of Russia. The stakes were high. The risk was high. The returning benefit was high. If succeeded, it would be *the* chance to come once in a lifetime. But, the business seemed to be so unpredictable that most merchants could not continue the business after one or two attempts unless there was a solid organized supporting group—financial, security, and social network support. The former merchants said that it would be hard to maintain the

business without support from gangster groups that backed their security. Even though Korean Chinese merchants remember good things about Russia as a developed and civilized western country, Russia seemed to be too foreign for them to live a life for a longer period of the time, not to mention that the language was hard to master. The *Soviet wind* was peaked in the early 1990s, formulating the flow of mobility to Russia and new economy, depending on the large sum of money from Russia. But, it rapidly faded out and was replaced with the *Korean Wind* as China normalized the diplomatic relationship with South Korea in 1992.

1.2.4 *Wind 4: Korean Wind*

The diplomatic normalization between China and South Korea in 1992 was an epochal event for the Korean Chinese community in China in the sense that it rejuvenated kinship ties forgotten under Cold War politics and created a new flow of population. In addition, Koreans have come to China to find new business partners and cheaper labor, while Korean Chinese moved to Korea to serve as the cheaper labor. I often heard Korean Chinese recall their first encounter with South Korea, expressing their overwhelming anxiety and nervousness about the visit to the long forbidden “home” country and reunion with separated family (see chapter5). The kinship reunions that the South Korean government began the late 1980s as a humanitarian gesture became a channel for Korean Chinese to visit Korea. South Korea issued “kinship visit visas” to Korean Chinese, which triggered the intense flow of Korean Chinese migration later in the 1990s. Many Korean Chinese brought Chinese medicine in bulk to South Korea (chapter6), partially as gifts for relatives, and partially to sell for profit. At the heart of stories about traveling to South Korea was always the amount of money the teller could make in several months by selling Chinese medicine. Through these repeated trips, Korea emerged as a profitable marketplace for Korean Chinese from Yanbian.

The financial benefit was substantial. Back in the late 1980s, “Ten Thousand Yuan” (*Wanyuan* currently \$1,600) was an amount considered conferring symbolic affluence and success in China—households that had succeeded in saving this amount were lauded as *wanyuanbu* (ten thousand Yuan household). But some Korean Chinese made ten thousand yuan from a single visit to Korea. This sudden material achievement incited Korean Chinese to have a fantasy of South Korea as a dreamland. “If you go to Korea,” it was said, “your back will ache from gathering dollars all over in the street.” South Korea, which Communist China had long portrayed as an impoverished capitalist enemy and “baby” subject to the US imperialism, started becoming viewed as a destination that enabled an escape from socialist poverty in China, in particular, for farmers. The Korean Chinese outflow to Korea started slowly in the late 1980s as the South Korean economy expanded after hosting the Seoul Olympics in 1988. But emigration gathered dramatic momentum after 1992 with the normalization between the two countries.

The kinship visits rapidly evolved into labor migration in a couple of years. From the early 1990s, Korean Chinese who entered with the family visit visas began overstaying and working as cheap, illegal labor. However, despite the increasing numbers of undocumented Korean Chinese, the visa situation was not favorable to Korean Chinese from Yanbian. As I illustrated above, their ancestors, of course, had mostly moved from the contemporary North Korea to China beginning in the late nineteenth century, and thus, they had a harder time obtaining family visit visas because the majority of them did not have actual kinship ties to South Koreans and registration records left in South Korea.²⁰ As the suddenly well-off Korean

²⁰ The majority of Korean Chinese living outside of Yanbian (in Jilin, Heilongjiang, and Liaoning) had moved from the southern part of Korea—current South Korea—during the Japanese occupation. Consequently they could easily demonstrate family ties to South Korea, and were as a group able to enter the South Korean labor market prior to Yanbian Korean Chinese.

with the highest “success” rate. The search and its impact continue till now even after the visa regulations have been relatively loosened as I lay out in the Introduction (also see chapter 4).

1.3 The Economy of Kinship

The *Korean Wind* was first felt in Northeast China outside of Yanbian, in other parts of Jilin province and in Heilongjiang, areas where Korean Chinese with ethnic origins in the southern part of Korea (*Chosun* at the time of migration) have been more likely to settle. The ancestors of the Korean Chinese now living in these areas were the so-called “latecomers” to China, who arrived during the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in the 1930s, whereas Korean Chinese who settled in Yanbian—the border area—generally arrived much earlier, moving into China starting in the late nineteenth century.²¹ Since the early comers, from the northern part of Korea, took the land of Yanbian (in the southern part of Manchuria), the latecomers had to go further north, into northern Manchuria, to find unoccupied lands untaken. Due to the particular topography shaped by Korean Chinese migration history, Korean Chinese living outside of Yanbian tend to maintain stronger emotional attachments to South Korea as their original homeland, and their kinship ties are usually to relatives in South Korea.²² Here I want to introduce the unique intersection of ethnicity with kinship embedded in Korean Chinese transnational migration.

In the wake of the *Korean Wind*, kinship ties to South Korea have come to possess a certain currency: they have become a core means of enabling Korean Chinese migration to South Korea in the name of visiting relatives and reuniting families. Moreover, marriage to

²¹ Korean Chinese make distinctions among themselves depending on their ancestors’ origins in the Korean peninsula. Those whose ancestors came from southern Korea (and settled in northern Manchuria) are called *Namdoqi* (the southerners), while those whose ancestors came from northern Korea (and who mostly settled in Yanbian) are called *Buldoqi* (northerners).

²² A majority of them speak in the accent of *Kyungsangdo*, a district in the southern part of South Korea. These Korean Chinese do in fact sound like “actual” Koreans.

Koreans has turned out to be the easiest way to get Korean citizenship, which then channels the opportunity to visit Korea to the families of Korean Chinese who have married Koreans. As a result, kinship—both rejuvenated and manufactured—has become the very site of production of economic value. In other words, family connections that once posed a fearful political threat to Korean Chinese during the Cultural Revolution now enable transnational migration (chapter 5).

Exploring how the economy of Korean Chinese kinship works as actual currency, I am informed by and indebted to kinship studies²³ that view kinship as a major factor in maintaining social continuity, as a means of transferring goods, ideas, and behaviors based on consangual and affilial relationships (Peletz 1995), and as a “mutuality of being” and “intersubjective belonging” (Sahlins 2012).²⁴ The core of debate in this field lies in the contentions embedded in kinship: kinship as a connection between two domains (natural/given and cultural/creative) (Strathern 1992b), as an aftereffect of the biological realities of sexual reproduction intersected with cultural codes and social meanings (Schneider 1984; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995), and also as “a symbolic construction” of the natural facts on which society imagines itself to be based (Strathern 1992)²⁵

²³ In particular, Schneider’s statement that “blood is thicker than water,” made in relation to the culture of American kinship, still shows a strong distinction between codes of social conduct and blood as biogenetic substance. He sees “relatives,” as defined by blood relationships in biogenetic terms, as symbols for biogenetic substance (Schneider 1980; Carsten 2004).

²⁴ Sahlins argues that people can choose kinship but they cannot choose how to react to their kin because the code of conduct is categorical and already existing (Sahlins 2012:10).

²⁵ Franklin and McKinnon, in their introduction to the edited volume *Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies*, point out that kinship can signify specific kinds of connection and inclusion, and simultaneously, disconnection and exclusion, that confound boundaries and classification (2001: 15). Besides the role of kinship as social demarcation, I also pay attention to the double bound meaning of kinship from an economic point of view. Korean Chinese kinship connections and disconnections are based on a demarcation between deserving and undeserving kinship, in accordance with the values attached to kinship (as illustrated by the contrasting kinship relations of Korean Chinese to North Koreans on the one hand, and South Koreans on the other).

As new technologies and new types of human relationships have redirected sociality and community across and beyond biological and familiar relations, “new kinship studies” have coined novel kinship terms and political relationships such as “*families we choose*” (Weston 1997),²⁶ “queer diaspora” (Eng 2010), “adoptee kinship” (Kim 2010), and “transnational kinship” (Freeman 2011). These new kinship studies do not mean to celebrate the “implosion” of nature and culture; rather, they pay critical attention to “the how and why of explaining forms of cultural change and social organization emergent in the context of an altered grid of relationally” (Franklin 2001:319). Within the new kinship studies, I find especially useful the concept of “enterprise-up” of kinship (Harraway 1997; McKinnon 2000; Strathern 1992) in that it focuses on the special role of kinship in maintaining property and economic status, for example in new genetic and reproductive biotechnologies. McKinnon especially discusses the economies of kinship, looking into the relationship between paternity and private property, analyzing kinship as a method of perpetuating patriarchal genealogy by “enterprising up” paternity (2001:284).

Kinship as a means for “enterprising up” is relevant to the analysis of Korean Chinese kinship practices, which are invariably reinvented and employed for economic reasons in the context of transnational migration. At the same time, Korean Chinese kinship critically challenges kinship studies that still emphasize familial and social continuity, in that Korean Chinese experience shows how kinship can be manufactured and performed, through (for example) faking documents, without any of the assumed continuity and sociality of kinship. I push my examination further in two ways. First, I analyze Korean Chinese kinship as a site of value production, not only through genealogy but also through enabling certain kinds of

²⁶ Kath Weston’s discussion of gay kinship is convergent to and divergent from Schneider’s argument. Weston states, “Informed by contrasting notions of free will and fixed-ness often attributed to biology in this culture, the opposition between straight and gay families echoes old dichotomies such as nature versus culture and real versus ideal.” (1997:38). Here, the agency of “we” (in families we choose) highlights each person’s part in constructing gay communities, in contrast to biological families based on ideas of blood that are out of individual control.

transactions. The following stories tell us the actual process through which kinship produces and transfers the potential value that enables transnational migration. Kinship is not here a means of passing on values or property to the next generation so as to maintain genealogical and social continuity. Rather, there is a measurable, tradable value attached to the kinship tie that enables transnational migration. Kinship becomes a commodity that circulates and generates actual currency in the migration industry.

Second, I try to rethink communal affect and sociality built upon continuity and long-term temporality (Carsten 2004; Weston 1997). Korean Chinese migrants and migration markets have rejuvenated and transformed decades of broken kinship ties. Many Korean Chinese experiences, however, demonstrate that reforging kinship ties does not lead to the establishment of sociality. The reconstituted relationship rapidly devolves into an economic transaction between Korean Chinese and Koreans. The assumed “shared sociality” and “shared memories”²⁷ are largely omitted in Korean Chinese kinship practice. What follows—an exploration of Korean Chinese kinship relationships with both North Koreans and South Koreans—leads us to a new understanding of kinship as a commodity established on the basis of a fragmented and discontinuous temporality.

1.3.1 The Burden of Kin: North Korea

Let me return to the story of the trip to a border town with Cadre Yang. While guiding me to the border landscape facing North Korea, Cadre Yang added criticism of the odd dictatorship of Kim Jong Il who had not taken care of the basic livelihood of his people. “We,

²⁷ Sahlins also points out the temporality embedded in kinship saying, “unlike kinship by procreation alone, an extended temporality is a condition of the relatedness at issue, since it requires a cumulative process of parental care—a condition more or less true of many forms of performative kinship”(2012:8). Here, “shared life,” “shared memories,” “shared bodies” require long-term temporality to make and maintain kinship.

Chinese, are full of food. We resolved the famine problem long ago.” When we reached the top of a mountain that allowed us to see the North Korea side, he pointed out the various North Korean towns with his finger, naming each of them for me.²⁸ He started talking about his North Korean relatives and the severe poverty afflicting the country, but his sympathy seemed limited for some reason.

His father’s family was originally from a small North Korean town. They crossed the Tumen River when Yang’s father was five years old, in the early 1920s. After settling in Yuejing, they focused on farming and reclaiming wasteland. All of his family members were farmers, and he grew up doing rice farming, too. Although most of his family now lived in Yanbian, Cadre Yang had an aunt who “ran away” from China to North Korea during the Great Leap, in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, when China suffered from starvation and poverty. During this time the Communist Party requested sacrifices from farmers in order to concentrate on industrial development, in order to pay off the debt from the Soviet Union. An old Communist Party member I met in a farming town recalled the era: “Nothing was left after we handed in the crops we harvested to the government.” This impoverished condition, exacerbated by natural disaster, motivated some Korean Chinese to steal away to North Korea, which was better off than China at that time. In the early 1960s, North Korea, recovering from the ruins of the Korean War, started boosting its heavy industry, and welcomed Korean Chinese to serve as factory workers. Since factory work, which represented urbanity and modernity, was considered much more prestigious than farming, this became a popular option for Korean Chinese farmers

²⁸ The *Tumen River* flows for 548 kilometers (340 miles) between China and North Korea, forming the border between them. There are many small towns on both sides of the river. Where the river is particularly narrow, towns on opposing sides (China and North Korea) are almost like neighborhoods of the same town.

dreaming of a better life in their “home country.” As one of the old cadres told me, “A lot of Korean Chinese secretly crossed the Tumen River from our village for the first couple of years in the 1960s. We were too poor to eat properly here in China. We found several people disappearing every day. They ran away to North Korea during the night. The fashion of ‘running away’ to North Korea swept through Yanbian at that time.”

However, life in North Korea turned out to be more regulated and rigid than they expected. In addition, their living conditions were not better than in China and the North Korean government did not give them much help. Thus, these runaways tended to return to China after a couple of years. The Chinese government accepted them back without inflicting any official punishment.²⁹ In the midst of comings and goings, some runaways settled in North Korea and lived through up until now like Cadre Yang’s aunt. But these Korean Chinese runaways to North Korea could not imagine the critical poverty they would endure in the ensuing decades.

Cadre Yang continued to talk about his aunt and her family from North Korea. A few years ago, Cadre Yang’s aunt came to visit Yang’s family with her two sons. Her husband had died from a serious illness that could not be treated amid the starvation and poverty. Since they had not seen one another for several decades, Yang’s family eagerly anticipated their visit. They collected and packed old clothes, blankets, and food for the aunt to take back with her, not to mention enough money to survive for a year in North Korea. They fed them well, offering many different kinds of meat dishes. As Cadre Yang remembered, “They could not stop eating since they had been starving for years in North Korea. We watched them eat with

²⁹ In fact, these runaways were subjected to political persecution during the Cultural Revolution as “North Korean spies.”

deep pity. When my aunt's family went back to North Korea, their complexion looked much better and healthier." The aunt and cousins completely filled their truck with what Yang's parents had gathered for them. If they sold what they brought back from China,³⁰ it would have been of great financial help, said Cadre Yang. His family felt good about the help they were able to provide. Within less than a year, however, the aunt's son came to visit Yang's family again to plead for more money. Cadre Yang sensed that his cousin did not seem to be thankful or apologetic at all. As his North Korean relatives asked for assistance more and more frequently, Yang's sympathy turned into apathy. "I have a lot to deal with on my plate," he said.

It's not only in the border towns on the Tumen River like Yuejing, but also throughout Yanbian, that family histories related to North Korea are preserved among Korean Chinese. In these narratives, the meaning of North Korea is multifaceted. On the one hand, North Korea is the ancestral homeland; on the other it is a comparison group to prove the success of Chinese socialism. North Korea, under tight control and surveillance, also substantiates the significance of freedom, which Chinese believe they ordinarily enjoy in contrast to North Koreans. Looking at the suffering of his North Korean relatives there, Cadre Yang came to realize that his life in China was relatively affluent and happy. But he also became aware that he was not affluent enough to provide endless economic support to them. Relatives in impoverished North Korea have turned out to be a financial as well as emotional burden for Cadre Yang, who sometimes hopes to go to South Korea to make money if there is a proper visa available for him.

³⁰ Interestingly, North Koreans refused to accept the blue jeans because they could not sell them in North Korea, where they were regarded as symbolic of U.S. imperialism.

In addition, despite the geographical proximity and biological kinship tie, reunions after several decades often do not eventuate in any longer term relationships, ending up as one-time life events.³¹ The sharp economic disparity between North Korea and China has led many Korean Chinese to block out North Korean relatives who threaten to be financial burdens. Most of all, since North Korean refugees have become a critical political concern in the border area, Korean Chinese try to avoid causing political trouble for themselves in the name of kinship ties. In contemporary China where “money is more important than anything,” as many Korean Chinese put it, they have turned their interest to South Korea where they can work and make better money than in China. If they have no kin in South Korea, as is the case of most Korean Chinese in Yanbian, they have crafted new or fake kinship ties through marriage or illegal migration brokers. On the one hand, kinship ties to North Korea have been forgotten, obscured, or denied over time. On the other hand, new kinship ties to South Korea have come into being, generated by a new flow of migration and migration market.

1.3.2 The Currency of Kin: South Korea

As the kinship visits dramatically evolved into labor migration in a couple of years, both Korean Chinese and Korean relatives soon discovered the mutual lucrative aspect of kinship visa, which led its wide commodification in migration market. I heard the similar pattern of narrative regarding the “visa deal” that Korean Chinese went through with their Korean relatives. A lady I met in Korea told me about the visa deal story as following.

We (my husband and I) were so happy to find that there lived a cousin of my husband in Korea. We felt as if we got a lottery ticket since we could be invited to go to Korea.

³¹ *Tumen River*, a movie directed by Zhang Liu, was shot in a Yanbian town on the border, and dramatizes the ambivalent relationship between Korean Chinese and North Koreans as co-ethnic groups. On the one hand North Koreans are seen as impoverished neighbors in desperate need: the movie portrays the friendship that develops between a Korean Chinese boy and a North Korean boy who crosses the River in search of food. On the other hand, North Korean defectors are often seen as criminal outsiders; the movie also contains a scene in which a North Korean man rapes a Korean Chinese girl who had given him food.

Yet, once they decided to invite us (husband and herself), they started asking us to pay money for the visa application. It was five thousand dollars. It was fairly big money back in the early 1990s. We had to pay that amount for the cousin because we still thought that it was much better deal than going through illegal brokers. After we entered Korea, there was no business left between the cousin and us. In Korea, we could not get close to the cousin's family because the family was separated too long—the connection was broken even before the Korean War.

The encounter between Korean Chinese and Korean relative did not seem to look like a happy family reunion, the family long split by the Korean War, but rather a business-like that required actual money transactions. While having the visa deal in “business-like” ways, these two parties ended up turning backs to each other or breaking up the relationship in worse cases. However, given the truth that there are less Korean Chinese in Yanbian, who have relied on the kinship visit visa to enter Korea than other area of Northeast China (for the reason that most ancestors of Yanbian Korean Chinese had moved from the contemporary North Korea to China), having the kinship ties to South Koreans was highly considered the potential currency. A few precursors who had ties, took advantage of them, and thus visited South Korea proved their rapid economic achievement. This suddenly well-off Korean Chinese came to spur the “Korean dream” in Yanbian.

Here, government policy toward Korean Chinese immigration needs special attention. The kin-focused visa issued to Korean Chinese by the Korean government (Freeman 2011; Kim 2011) has formulated the pattern of Korean Chinese migration, the policy that has Korean Chinese aiming to extend and manipulate kinship relations. Since Yanbian Korean Chinese have fewer “biological” kinship ties to South Koreans on the basis of family genealogy as mentioned above, marriage has become a major means to create affilial kinship between Korean Chinese women and South Korean men—“in-law” family. The reasons for and consequences of the marriages vary greatly, of course, and cannot always be classed

simply or easily as “fake” or “real.” My aim here is not to explore the marriage patterns or the dynamics between two parties—Korean and Korean Chinese. Rather I focus on the way in which marriage plays a role in extending and transferring the “right” for the related kinship to enter South Korea; not only for direct family, parents and siblings, but also extended family members such as uncles and aunts.

The history of the visa regulation runs as follows. At the start of the Korean Chinese migration in the 1990s, Korean Chinese women who married a Korean man were able to invite her parents, and her parents were allowed to stay for a year. However, after the invitation visa became widely used to overstay and work in Korea, the Korean government has modified the visa conditions, allowing Korean Chinese women to invite more family members, and letting these invited members stay for longer periods of time. The intention of the government was to gradually increase the entry number of Korean Chinese and minimize the number of undocumented subjects. Yet the Korean government has resisted expanding the number of entry visas issued to Korean Chinese, in the name of protecting the domestic labor market. Yet, there is always an excess of Korean Chinese waiting to go to Korea. In these competitive circumstances, the Korean Chinese who do not get visas rely on illegal brokers to expedite the trip to South Korea, and the brokers always find a new loophole in the system.

The visa regulations of the Korean government are complicated and change frequently depending on the government’s position on immigrant labor and overseas Koreans. I am often surprised to see how knowledgeable Korean Chinese are about Korean visa trends, and how swiftly they are able to adjust their plans in tandem with policy changes. I heard much about the extended family invitation visa time and again. The story from the youngest member

of the hiking group, Jielan in her late twenties, provides us with an insight regarding the economy of kinship. She was a daughter of farmers from a rural part of Yanbian. Her parents were fairly well off compared to other farmers in her town, but they had a hard time paying for her college education solely with income from farming. In order to relieve the financial burden, her father tried to go to Korea many times via brokers, as many people he knew had done. But his visa applications kept being denied, until he finally succeeded just two years before. Jielan had a female cousin who got married to a South Korean man. The cousin could invite up to four related family members into South Korea according to the invitation regulation. After the cousin's parents (Jielan's father's brother and his sister-in-law) were invited as the first group, there were two "seats" left. There was a slight competition to get these remaining "seats" amongst Jielan's father's siblings over the years. Two years ago, the cousin's brother came back to China, and his "seat" became available to Jielan's father.³² Again the kin-focused visa regulation has created a flow of migration along the kinship chain.

This story is not uncommon in Yanbian. Once somebody has married a Korean man, the right to invitation can be transferred to other family members—both consangual and affilial kin. In addition, when the invitation visa cannot be used directed by family members, the visa can go on the "market" and be sold to "customers" who want to go to Korea. Here we obviously observe the birth of "paper kinship": kinship is not only the product of "relatedness" but also of the means to transfer rights as goods in the marketplace. In addition,

³² There are many different kinds of entry visa available to Korean Chinese at different moments because the Korean government has frequently changed the visa regulation. Since 2007, one of the most common types nowadays is the F-2 visa, which guarantees free entry for five years in order to work in designated fields (mostly physical labor and the service sector). In order to acquire the F-2, applicants have to take a qualification exam that tests their fluency in Korean and knowledge of Korean law and society. If the participants in the test gain over 60% of score, they qualify for a lottery, and if they are chosen in the lottery they are allowed to go to Korea. Jielan's mother and Jielan herself both passed the exam and won the lottery. Jielan's father went to Korea via the kinship visitation visa.

kinship is not a ground on which to create communal feeling or affect. Rather, it works as the potential currency that enables transnational migration and pursuit of a better economic future. The tie that used to pose a threat during the Cold War era turns out to have a valuable currency in the wake of the “*Korean Wind*”—the fashion that Korean Chinese have intensively pursued through migration for the last two decades—whereas the old socialist kinship with North Korean has been forgotten or obscured. The currency of kinship has formulated the direction and flow of Korean Chinese migration, providing migrants with potential market value.

My suggestion here is that the discovered and circulated currency attached to kinship leads Korean Chinese migrants not to create a sense of belonging to the homelands, but to facilitate the freer border crossing for the economic means, thereby making Korean Chinese migrants fall into others or strangers in “homeland” of South Korea. In other words, the currency of kinship has played a role in reinforcing the Korean Chinese border affect and minority subjectivity. Here, the role of “kinship” is peculiar: it does not only imply the biological tie that brings about empathy and sociality. It also challenges the very biological basis of kinship by crafting and manipulating kinship as a commodity that confers the ability to visit (and work in) South Korea: the emergence of “paper kinship,” creating relatedness to strangers who might sometimes use somebody else’s visa and ID cards. On the other hand, the actually biological kinship tie to North Korean relatives has worn thin and been downplayed due to the emotional, financial and political burden it entails, despite sympathy for the impoverished state of North Korea. The links and ruptures facilitated by the economy of kinship have continuously rewired the connectivity of this borderland to the global economy, affecting new

flows of migration from China to Korea, and from Korea to China. The economy of kinship is driven less by familial intimacy than by desire for actual currency, “enterprising-up” kinship.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter aims to stage Yanbian as an ethnic border zone and Korean Chinese as an ethnic minority of China, the condition that has shaped Korean Chinese as a *mobile ethnicity* who have had to sensitively respond to the social changes via constant mobility across and beyond China. I situate the historical and geographical context of Korean Chinese migration history in correspondence with the vernacular periodization of the *Winds* widely circulated amongst Korean Chinese. Most of all, I highlight the *Korean Wind* as a main driving force that has shaped the contemporary landscape of Yanbian—“everybody is gone”—as a symptom occurring at the intersection of post Cold War with post socialism. Here, I pay a special attention to the mechanism that has expedited and perpetuated the *Korean Wind* by looking into the role of kinship currency deployed and mobilized in the migration market.

The particular economy of Korean Chinese kinship challenges the previous kinship studies in two different ways. First, kinship supposes that the related members are expected to invest a certain time and effort in order to create and maintain the community and relationship (Carsten 2004; Sahlin 2012; Weston 1997)—it is based on the longer temporality. And yet, half a century of the Cold War circumstance and political turmoil across East Asia resulted in breaking and forbidding Korean Chinese kinship ties to two Koreas. Under the interrupted temporality, Korean Chinese discovered and rejuvenated the kinship ties and quickly transformed them into a form of currency that made it possible to facilitate the flow of transnational migration along with the rapid economic restructuring in China. In this respect, Korean Chinese kinship in a form of commodity and currency does not share much

time and effort to create community and sociality. Second, relating to the first suggestion, I have argued that the Korean Chinese kinship is not much a medium for the “culture of relatedness”(Casten 2000), as most kinship studies assume, but a pipeline for transferring derivative values as seen in a form of “paper kinship”—a commodity—through faking or making marriage and counterfeiting documents. In this process—either faking or making, Korean Chinese migrants have been constantly asked to prove or perform the biological and legal related-ness, which does not lead to the cultural relatedness and development of the kinship affect or sociality. The strangers tied through “paper kinship” come to co-exist via the anonymous and random migration market. My introduction to historical formation of Korean Chinese as *mobile ethnicity* and particular migration context shaped by the *Korean Wind* will lead to dramatic social differentiation and transformation in the following chapters; the remittance development, new family relationship, gender contention and dynamics, and ethnic politics in reaction to multi-layered migration *in and out* of Yanbian.

Chapter 2. *Live or Leave:* The Liminal Life on the Remittance Development

Yanji is a compact and vibrant city; we can often hear the sound of fireworks that celebrate the opening of new business as well as the noise from demolishing old buildings soon to be replaced with a new high rise building, *diantilou* (a building with elevators). The lively streets of downtown are full of the high-toned voices of sellers, haggling customers, and Korean songs (that are widely enjoyed by Korean Chinese). On weekends, restaurants, massage parlors, saunas, and karaoke bars are full. We often have to wait in long lines to find an empty room at the fancier karaoke bars or massage parlors. Taxis are lined up waiting to take home night customers. This small city is well set-up for customers to spend money on eating, drinking, singing, dancing, and massages 24 hours a day. Within this landscape, what especially caught my attention is the constant flow of Han Chinese and Korean Chinese flocking into Yanji, not only from the countryside of Yanbian, but also from other Chinese cities, to serve the new developing industry of consumption and to enjoy the rapid urbanization of the region. There is a strong local belief; this animated consumption and driven migration have not been made possible without the “Korean money,” remittances that Korean Chinese migrants have sent from Korea for the last two decades. I call this emerging phenomenon *remittance development*,¹ the development deeply and heavily dependent upon the flow and temporality of remittances.

¹ The body of literature on development views development as a purportedly self-evident modern standard (Ferguson 1990; 1999), and as a set of relations among institutions, practices, and systematization for a whole (Escobar 1995). These studies assume that development moves from developed regions to underdeveloped ones by conveying and implanting modernity through education, capital investment, and economic-political restructuring. My focus is rather to investigate the double-bound aspect of remittance development that brings about the contention between autonomy and dependence. Development in Yanbian is autonomous, in that it has been enabled not by external foreign forces of capital that intend to “modernize” Yanbian, but rather is a consequence of the intensive transnational labor of the Yanbian people. At the same time, it is contingent and dependent upon the flow of remittances that unpredictably fluctuate with economic conditions, both local and global.

The close relationship between remittance and development has been pointed out in a UNDP report that highlights the positive agency of migrants in development (UNDP 2009; Glick Shiller and Faist 2010). Remittance is conceived as a “livelihood strategy” by which migrants spread risk and create insurance, thereby improving well-being, reducing poverty, and stimulating economic growth (de Hass 2007). By means of remittances, transnational migration can become a resource for the production of capital and a dynamic force that promotes entrepreneurial activity and economic expansion (Messy and Parado 1998). Most of all, migrants facilitate not only the transfer of money, but also “social remittances,” such as new perceptions of human rights, gender equity, and democracy (Faist 2010; Levitt 2001; Levitt & Lamba-Neives 2011). Although the negative effects—brain drain, reduced economic activity, productive disarticulation, and increasing local disparities in sending countries—have been highlighted (Glick Shiller 2010; Wise and Covarrubias 2010), the migration-development nexus is affirmed by the force of remittances, the money transfers vital to social transformation and economic development in both sending and receiving countries.

Even though the migration-development nexus is also obvious in Yanbian, the development based on remittances cannot be stable or predictable. Until 2008, a billion dollars a year in remittances had been flowing from Korea to Yanbian according to unofficial Yanbian customs statistics. But the global financial crisis in 2008 caused the influx to drop to about seven hundred million dollars because of a sharp depreciation of the Korean currency. But the Korean currency has since recovered, and as the value of the Korean won increased from 10,000 won: 40 yuan in 2008 to 10,000 won: 58.90 yuan in 2011, Korean Chinese have rushed to exchange the won into yuan, driving consumption up again (*Yeonhap News*, May 1, 2011). That is to say, the flow of remittance is very volatile in tandem with the contemporary inter-

connected global economy. The whole economy is sensitively shifting along with this unstable money flow.

An insightful conversation that I had with a Han Chinese taxi driver nicely reveals the fluctuating characteristic of remittance and the development. The Han Chinese taxi driver, a migrant from countryside of Heilongjiang, emphasized the high levels of consumption in Yanbian, particularly that of Korean Chinese. He continued to tell me.

Most of my customers are Korean Chinese. Korean Chinese spend money like water. When the Korean economy is good, my business is good because Korean Chinese make more and spend more. They think that when it runs out, they can go back to Korea to make more. I came to Yanbian to become a taxi driver because I heard that Korean Chinese are good at spending money like that. It's hard for us Han Chinese to go to Korea. We have to make ends meet in China. We cannot spend money like them.

This taxi driver statement can be seen as providing testimony to bolster the ethnic stereotype widely acknowledged and circulated in Yanbian. At the same time, he exemplifies the interdependency and differentiated mobility between Korean Chinese and Han Chinese, accelerated by the *Korean wind* and Korean money. The common route of nightlife—dinner followed by karaoke, massage, and lamb skewers over drinks—seems to be generated and maintained by different kinds and scales of migration. Remittance development occurs on multiple scales—transnational and internal, countryside and city, small city and large city—collapsed together and co-present in migration stories, the complex migration that constitutes the ethnic-finance-city-scape of Yanji.

This chapter aims to understand the cultural logic and actual practice of multi-layered and multi-scaled movements of population in the ethnic zone in the wake of the remittance development. I examine how transnational migration has been intertwined and intersected with internal migration—from countryside to big city, from big city to bigger city, from city to

countryside, and vice versa—restructuring the ethnic-finance-urban scape of Yanji, in flux and in transition. My particular attention is to the constant *hesitation*, between living and leaving, the structure of feeling² that various migrants have confessed. To do that, I analyze the stories of migrants to the city: a farmer moving back and forth between the country and the city, a laid-off factory worker, a *xiagang* (laid off) worker moving from a small city to Yanji, a South Korean entrepreneur moving to Yanji in pursuit of new business opportunities, and a Han Chinese *dagong* (physical worker) moving from the countryside to Yanji. On the basis of these personal stories, I piece together the puzzle of an ethnic margin that has been reshaped by the *Korean Wind* in order to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of *remittance development*, which is a central condition of life across the region. I have three aims in this chapter. First, I explore the way that Korean Chinese attempt to re-define and re-characterize the city of Yanji in response to the *Korean wind*. Yanji, which has been considered an ethnic hub as well as ethnic enclave³, engenders mixed feelings in Korean Chinese as they interact more and more with the “external” world. Focusing on multi-scaled migration, I analyze the new ways in which Korean Chinese have related to Yanbian, an ethnic hub that is continuously remade, largely by the Korean Wind. Second, I examine how transnational migration has been intertwined with Han Chinese and Korean Chinese internal migration. In particular, my interest is centered on the ambivalence between living and leaving as a dominant structure of feeling amongst Korean Chinese.

² By “structure of feeling,” Raymond Williams means the affective elements of consciousness and relationships that are “not feeling against thought but thought as felt and feeling as thought.” That is a practical consciousness of a present kind in a living and inter-relating continuity as a living process (Williams 1977:132-133).

³ There is a double bounded connotation of Yanji; that is an ethnic hub as an ethnic center while at the same time it is an ethnic enclave as a parochial ethnic zone.



Photo 4. The Yanji International Airport. There are direct flights between Yanji and Seoul several times a day. By June Hee Kwon(2009)

Third, I investigate the ripple effect caused by the Korean Wind. Here, I am attentive to “differentiated mobility” (Massey 1993)⁴ by ethnicity (between Han and Korean Chinese) in transnational migration, a mobility driven by the uneven and unequal positioning of different groups and persons in relation to various flow and movements (Chu 2009: 10). How differently have Han Chinese and Korean Chinese appropriated and reacted to the Korean Wind? In what ways have these two distinctive ethnic groups been convergent to and divergent from each other in the context of remittance development? Throughout the chapter, I argue that the Korean Wind has stirred an ethnically specific mobility. But I also argue that the Korean Wind

⁴ Doreen Massey critiques the concept “time-space compression,” coined by David Harvey, as too broad and undifferentiated. Instead, she introduces the notion of the “power-geometry of time-space compression,” showing how mobility can be differentiated: “different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinctive ways in relation to these flows and interconnections.... Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility; some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it.”(Massey 1993:61)

has created a deep inter-dependency between Han and Korean Chinese, both of whom have become distinctively connected to and influenced by the flow of Korean money and the remittance development of the region in conjunction with global economic changes.

2.1. Urban Scape: Ethnic Hub in Flux

2.1.1 Ethno Scape⁵

Over the last twenty years, the Han Chinese population in Yanbian has increased sharply, now reaching 65 percent of the total. This is one of the critical results of the rise in labor migration to Korea described by the saying, “*gone with the Korean Wind*.” Simply speaking, Korean Chinese leave Yanbian to live a better life, whereas Han Chinese move into Yanbian—also to find a better life. The various migratory traffic flows—coming-in and going-out, living and leaving—have gradually reorganized the ethnic landscape. The daily conversations that I had with Korean Chinese illustrated their complex feelings toward these rapid population changes.

For example, I frequently heard Korean Chinese observe that before the Korean wind hit Yanbian, most taxi drivers were Korean Chinese. But now the Korean Chinese have left, and the taxi drivers are all Han Chinese migrants. And that is not the only occupation that has been affected. Most service industries are now overwhelmingly staffed by young Han Chinese workers (*fumuyuan*) who have moved from the countryside of Jilin and Heilongjiang in northeast China in order to work as waiters and waitresses at restaurants, karaoke bars, and saunas. Cashiers at supermarkets and shopping centers, bank tellers, and postal clerks are mostly Han Chinese. Sellers in markets and business owners are Han Chinese. In Yanbian, it is impossible

⁵ In an article, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy* (1990), Appadurai coined several new terms—ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, financescape, ideoscape—to map out the disjunctive and non-isomorphic landscape of the global economy. Here, I borrow Appadurai’s *scape* that indicates the fluidity and irregularity of the flow in order to capture the fluctuations of an ethnic zone going through rapid economic and urban development.

not to interact with Han Chinese and not to speak the Chinese language on a daily basis—unlike a decade ago. A Korean Chinese reporter told me that Han Chinese dominance is a fairly new phenomenon: “Yanbian has become a *Han Chinese World* [*hanjokgol* in Korean]. It is not like before. Old Korean Chinese farmers who are not fluent in Chinese find it harder and harder to get by in Yanbian. We are concerned about the increasing Han Chinese population. Yanbian could be taken over by Han Chinese, and we could lose the status of autonomous zone due to the small portion of Korean Chinese population in the region.” The encroaching Han Chinese “occupation” of Yanbian has increased ethnic tensions and threatened the status of the Korean Chinese who had been the majority for most of the last six decades, since the Autonomous Prefecture was officially established in 1952.

The tensions between Han Chinese and Korean Chinese are juxtaposed with a feeling of “ethnic comfort.” Ethnic comfort has been structured partly on the basis of a spatial division by ethnicity. First of all, schools are divided; Korean Chinese and Han Chinese go to different schools and are taught in different languages—Korean and Chinese respectively. Consequently, social networks tend to be ethnically differentiated. Except for those few who go to Han Chinese schools, Korean Chinese testify they do not have many close Han Chinese friends. And the reverse is true as well, as I found it from multiple interviews with Han Chinese and Korean Chinese. Most of all, marriage has played a crucial role in consolidating boundaries between the two ethnic groups. Even though Korean Chinese have lived in China for more than a century, most Korean Chinese I met in Yanbian and South Korea strongly discourage the inter-ethnic marriage of their children, due to the language barrier and presumed cultural differences.⁶

⁶ These stereotypes are commonly circulated in Yanbian: Korean Chinese men are supposed to be patriarchal, refusing to help with house work and lacking respect for women, while Korean Chinese women are considered to be very domestic, devoted to housework and serving their husbands. Han Chinese are generally thought to be more frugal and diligent than Korean Chinese. Han Chinese men are family-centered and respect women, while

Although there are growing ethnic and cultural interactions and inter-ethnic marriages between Han and Korean Chinese, the “ethnic comfort” built upon social separation causes Yanbian Korean Chinese to feel mostly detached from China’s dominant Han culture and social network.

In Yanbian, the ethnic hub as well as ethnic enclave of Korean Chinese, I found that Korean Chinese reveal the double bound perspectives of ethnic dis/comfort when Yanbian is compared with other Chinese cities. The feeling emerges more obviously when Korean Chinese travel outside of Yanbian, in what is called 外地 (*waidi*, meaning external world). Jielan, a college graduate in her late twenties, insightfully explained the duality of “ethnic comfort.”

Whenever I take a train and stop seeing Korean signs—which means I’m leaving Yanbian—I feel as if I am in “real” China. Even when I go to Changchun, which is not the best or largest city in China, I feel ashamed that I am from a small ethnic town, and I feel myself not urban enough compared to these city people. In addition, I speak Chinese in an accent that sounds like a foreigner. Sometimes Chinese ask me if I am from Korea, thinking that I am Korean. Whenever I leave Yanbian, I just feel disheartened because I am not Chinese enough.

Nevertheless, she continued to affirm that despite its backwardness and marginal location, Yanji is still “the best city for me,” because “it has everything I need.” In addition to Jielan, many other Korean Chinese friends of mine, in their twenties to forties, expressed similar contradictory feelings regarding the “ethnic comfort” of Yanbian. Interestingly, the *best-ness* of Yanbian comes from ethnic comfort, while this same ethnic comfort forces Korean Chinese to realize they are living within a parochial and insular ethnic enclave. In other words, the perception that “*Yanbian is the best place to live*” is frequently accompanied by a disdain for Yanbian based on its small size, backwardness, and marginal border location. In fact, I often heard from non-Yanbian Korean Chinese that Yanbian Korean Chinese are often stigmatized

Han Chinese women are believed to be strong and dominating, unlike Korean Chinese women. These beliefs have helped to structure networking patterns, social relationships, and marriages.

as “*a frog in a small pond*,” the assumption being that they have narrower minds and worldviews.⁷

Yanbian’s cultural and political autonomy has helped to maintain or improve the quality of ethnic education, newspapers, and TV and radio stations. But Yanbian has also become a place where Korean Chinese end up interacting less with Han Chinese and Chinese society at large.

The dual aspect of Yanbian—a comfortable home as well as a parochial ethnic zone—might have helped to generate a particular receptivity to the *Korean Wind*. As I explained in the previous chapter, as recently as the 1990s few Chinese traveled even within China, not to mention internationally. Most Korean Chinese had never been to any Chinese cities outside of Yanbian before they visited Seoul. For the majority of Korean Chinese migrants to South Korea, Seoul was by far the largest city they had ever visited. In contrast to Chinese cities, toward which Korean Chinese often feel an ambiguous discomfort and fear, the city of Seoul gave emotional comfort and familiarity to Korean Chinese visitors on their arrival. Linguistic affinities play a critical role in creating the feeling of comfort; everything is written in Korean, and everybody is speaking Korean, the native language of Korean Chinese. In addition, Korean Chinese commonly testified that things were more “civil” (*wenming*) in Korea, at least at first sight; everything is cleaner and better organized than in China. Along with the high demand for Korean Chinese as a cheap source of labor, this widely-felt ethnic affinity has allowed Korean Chinese many opportunities in fields that require especially close and interactive verbal communication, such as restaurant service, motel cleaning, caring for the old and the sick, and construction. It is not only the vast income gap, but also the ethnic affinity that Korean Chinese

⁷ It is true that Korean Chinese living outside the prefecture of Yanbian have to frequently interact with Chinese-speaking Han people, whereas Yanbian Korean Chinese do not necessarily need to speak Chinese or develop networks with Han Chinese. This is because non-fluency in Chinese is still acceptable in Yanbian, and Korean culture and language enjoy official status.

feel for Korea, that has generated the massive, persistent, and sometimes reckless Korean Chinese labor migration to South Korea.

In response to the Korean Wind, in Yanbian, the new ethnic scape has emerged as newcomers arrive and go, live and leave as following. First, Korean Chinese rural migrants and laid-off workers have fled from the smaller cities and countryside of Yanbian to the city of Yanji in pursuit of better economic opportunities, better ethnic education, and urban living conditions. Of these migrants, the majority chooses to go to work in Korea, and the remittances enable them to become city residents and maintain an urban lifestyle for family members left behind in Yanbian. Another group is Han Chinese farmers who have moved mostly from other small towns in Northeast China or the Shandong area via kinship and social networks, drawn to the vast farming lands left behind by Korean Chinese who have left for Yanji or Korea. Due to these incoming Han Chinese farmers, what were once “pure” Korean Chinese ethnic towns—“empty out towns”—have been rapidly reconstituted by the influx of Han Chinese. Korean Chinese ethnic schools in countryside have had to close due to the lack of students, while new Han Chinese schools are opened. Korean Chinese farmers, who once did not need to speak Chinese at all, are confronted with more and more Han Chinese neighbors. In addition, Han Chinese—stereotypically thought to be clumsy rice farmers—have come to dominate the cultivation of rice, a crop that Korean Chinese farmers used to consider a particular specialty. Thirdly, in an urban setting, Han Chinese “*dagong*”⁸ (physical laborers) are an emerging group in construction and road-building. Most waiters, waitresses, and masseuses in service sectors are Han Chinese migrants. Since most Korean Chinese tend to be unwilling to perform physical and service labor in Yanbian, knowing that they can be paid so much more for

⁸ *Dagong* means “working for the boss, or selling labor, connoting commodification and a capitalist exchange of labor for wages (Ngai 1999; Yan 2009:6).

the same work in Korea, Han Chinese workers have come to meet the high demand for service labor in Yanbian, thereby becoming new floating residents in the region. In this booming economy, Han Chinese business people also compose an essential part of the new incoming population, especially in Yanji, where urban development and housing construction afford them many opportunities. In the next section, I explore the ways in which these Han Chinese *waidiren* (those who come from the outside) view the ethnic dynamic between Han Chinese and Korean Chinese and the specificities of remittance development in the region.

2.1.2 Differentiated Mobility

In Yanbian, my interactions with Han Chinese—the majority of the population—were narrower and less in-depth than those with Korean Chinese since my research mainly focuses on the Korean Chinese transnational migration. And yet I was exposed to a range of Han Chinese on a daily basis: taxi drivers, masseuses, *funnyuan*, cashiers, farmers, and students. Some Han Chinese were born and grew up in Yanbian. But the majority comes from other areas, such as Shandong, Jilin, and Heilongjiang. I appreciated these daily encounters, which gave me a chance to understand Han Chinese perspectives on the unique style of economic development of Yanbian. At the same time, I was curious to know what it means for Han Chinese to live in an ethnic prefecture—as a “relative minority.” One encounter with a Han Chinese businessman, Mr. Wang, whom I got to know through a Korean Chinese businessman, was particularly informative. Mr. Wang was in his mid-forties. He had moved from northern Heilongjiang to Yanji fifteen years ago in search of better economic opportunities. Despite the small size, its marginal location, and strong ethnic culture dominated by Korean Chinese, Mr. Wang made up his mind to move down to the city of Yanji, drawn by the strong business potential of Yanbian due to the influx of remittances from South Korea. He and several friends moved around the



Photo 5. Yanji's night scape. By June Hee Kwon (2011)

same time, following the rumor of Yanbian's economic rise and related possibilities in the wake of the Korean Wind. After multiple trials and errors in the new city, Mr. Wang ended up working in the interior decorating business, which has grown sharply in Yanji along with the increasing construction of modern apartments, mostly purchased by Korean Chinese migrants with money from their Korean jobs. Mr. Wang considered himself a success, and had settled well in Yanji. He was clearly proud of his knowledge of Korean Chinese ethnic culture as well as his ability to analyze Yanji's market conditions.

One day over lunch with other Han Chinese businessmen, Mr. Wang gave me a quiz with a smile: "Do you know what three main industries are in Yanbian?" He was obviously joking, but the joke reflected the peculiar characteristics of Yanbian's industrial and urban landscape. The three industries, he explained, are the following: 1) Yanbian's heavy industry (重工业) is its *bulgogi* restaurants, because smoke comes out of the chimney; 2) the region's light industry (轻

工业) is karaoke, because it is a service and leisure industry; and 3) Yanbian's handcraft industry (手工业) is massage, because it involves work with the hands. All of us at the lunch laughed, implicitly agreeing with him. Of course, the joke conveyed an understanding of the pleasure-centered consumption industries that have occupied a central position in the everyday life of Yanji. In practice, these leading industries—*bulgogi* restaurants, karaoke bars, massage parlors—are what keep the neon signs of the city lit up day and night, as if they are the main engine driving the city's economy.

At the same time, I understood this joke as a satire, implying that the city of Yanji is a marginal place lacking in “real” jobs that belong to stable and regular work unit (*danwei*) in a conventional sense. In other words, the joke portrays Yanbian, especially the capital city of Yanji, as a place where people do not work to produce things for profit-making, but only consume and spend for immediate gratification. Most of all, the satire presumably targets Korean Chinese who have developed a deep dependency on “Korean money,” a phrase that connotes money that is easy to make and quick to be spent. In this context, “Korean money” seems to have a double connotation. On the one hand, it is a corrupting influence that makes Korean Chinese lazy and extravagant and unwilling to work hard in China, as they instead dream of leaving for Korea. On the other hand, Korean money is truly the “heart” of the regional economy, and feeds many people in Yanbian—not only migrant families but also incoming business people and service workers across Yanbian, regardless of ethnicity.

Each ethnic group has reacted differently to Korean money, resulting in ethnic stereotypes built upon consumption patterns and methods to prepare for the future. Ethnic

stereotypes have been described as each “brushing against that of the other” (Chow 2002)⁹, as stereotypes are grounded on fixed ideas that prevent actual understanding of complex ethnic dynamics and subjectivities. For example, Mr. Wang and his friends at the lunch exchanged the following ethnic joke: “Korean Chinese are all customers who spend money for instant pleasure, whereas Han Chinese are business owners who make the money that Korean Chinese spend,” or “Korean Chinese spend money without thinking of tomorrow, whereas Han Chinese save money without spending for today’s pleasure.” I heard versions of ethnic stereotypes regarding spending habits time and again, not only from Han Chinese but also from Korean Chinese, clearly a form of “ethnic contrast” (Sollars 1995) that solidifies the boundary between “Korean Chinese” and “Han Chinese.” Yet I would argue that these stereotypes are *not* an attempt to make “ethnic others” by essentializing each group in order to maintain an ethnic hierarchy, in contrast to the colonial context that Bhabha illuminates (Bhabha 1994:112). Instead, I take these ethnic jokes as a consequential reflection of “differentiated mobility” (Messey 1993), the mobility that shows how each ethnic group becomes differently related to the economy of trans/national migration and thus creates different routes and pathways to the future.

Throughout my fieldwork, I have noticed strong patterns and tendencies of mobility in Yanbian: Korean Chinese migration is transnational between Yanbian and South Korea whereas Han Chinese migration is internal, into and across Yanbian. This means that Han Chinese are not immobile, but differently mobile from Korean Chinese. In this respect, ethnic stereotypes, such as those voiced at the lunch I discussed above, mirror differentiated mobilities by ethnicity that have developed in correspondence with the Korean wind and Korean money. In what

⁹ Chow describes this concept, drawing on Jameson’s discussion on the stereotype; brushing against that of another is “an encounter between surfaces rather than interiors—cannot really be foreclosed again by the liberalist suggestion that everyone is entitled to her own stereotypes of herself, which others should simply adopt for general use.” (Chow 2002: 57)

follows, I argue that the *Korean Wind* and Korean money did not cause or consolidate ethnic boundaries. Rather, I argue that they bring ripple effects to the lives of both Han and Korean Chinese in the wake of the “turbulence of migration” (Papastergiadis 2000), a turbulence that may seem chaotic, but is actually well-ordered through the interconnection and interdependency of various forces. In other words, despite distinctively typified ethnic images, for instance Korean Chinese customers vs. Han Chinese workers, neither group is immune to the *Korean Wind*. Instead, both are subject to its influences, and ethnicities and broad economic and cultural forces together constitute a special *ethnic-finance-urban-scape*.

I underscore the Korean wind as an ethnic-specific fashion and passion amongst Korean Chinese who take advantage of ethnic similarities (linguistic and cultural affinities) to enter the Korean labor market. The exclusiveness of this market has caused aspiring Han Chinese migrant laborers to fail repeatedly when attempting to get into Korea through illegal brokers. As one of these workers, depressed, told me, “It is much harder for Han Chinese to get a visa to Korea than Korean Chinese because we are not ethnic Korean, and thus less wanted in Korea.” Despite the far smaller chance for transnational migration to South Korea (due to their differentiated mobility), however, Han Chinese do not remain outside the dramatic social changes generated by the *Korean wind*. The Han Chinese of Yanbian who have not tried to migrate to Korea have a different vision for their futures and show different responses to the influx of Korean money, promoting their own businesses and chasing new possibilities in the domain developed and expanded by the influx of Korean money.

2.1.3 Jumping Scales

Geographical scale matters in the individual’s ordinary life, but so do politics, the economy, and culture. Multiple migrations that the case of Yanbian illustrates ask us to rethink

the scale that we take for granted. Neil Smith critically reconsiders the question of “scale” and “rescaling” while looking at the rise of the “New Europe” under the EU, rethinking the nation state as a taken-for-granted scale, and inverting the traditional notion of scale as “spatial expressions of social functions” (Castell 1976; Smith 2003). Viewing scale as a social construct and “material artifact,” Smith defines it in different ways: scale is the geographical organizer and expression of collective social action; scale is set or fixed amidst the flux of social interaction; scale is the spatial resolution of contradictory social forces (Smith 2003). The production of scale, expressed in terms like rural, urban, region, and global, is fluid and fixed (Jonas 1994). Scale is both fixed and politically charged as in the case of defense of national boundaries, tax issues, and identity attached to place. On the other hand, scale is fluid because new scales are restructured based on the resolution between opposing forces of competition and cooperation (Smith 1984). Social contention and interaction break the fixity of “given” scales, creating what Smith terms “jumping scale,” a process and politics of uneven geographical development (Smith 2003). Here, migration plays a pivotal role, as migrants appear to be “scale makers” (Caglar and Glick Schiller 2011) engaged in readjusting and rescaling society according to the flux of mobility.¹⁰

The concept of scale and rescaling is especially useful in considering Chinese internal migration; a growing phenomenon that challenges fixed scales via deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Appadurai 1996). Since Communist China was established in 1949, the governing of the population has taken shape in three aspects: 1) location (household

¹⁰ *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants* is an attempt to relocate the relationship between migrants and cities, by looking at city, not as a self-evident spatial unit in the global economy, but rather as “city scale” that is a domain of restructuring and rescaling in relationship to its mutual constitution of other sites of organized power (Glick Schiller & Caglar 2011). This discussion helps me think of Yanji, not as a city of the spatial unit, but as an intersection that multiple dynamic and traffic come across; urban and rural, national and transnational, ethnic enclave and emerging consuming place.

registration); 2) quantity (the one-child policy); and 3) quality (an emphasis on health, education, and welfare to improve human quality) (Greenhalgh & Winckler 2005). In China, population has become the very terrain for the governmentalization and politicization of life, shaping a new social order and subjectivity. The system of location control, *Hukou*, or family registration, is the most apt site to consider constraints on the rapidly increasing contemporary Chinese migration to cities. *Hukou* has played a critical role in demarcating urbanites from rural people by restricting free movement and differentiating social benefits between cities and rural areas. When established in 1958, *Hukou* represented the outcome of the social activity of people based on where they were and what they were doing, yet eventually it became a precondition for social activity (Xikui 1986 (2000)). It also re-solidified caste and class, setting in stone the socio-economic disparity between urbanites and rural people (Dutton 2000). Under the strict control of population movement, rural migrants who leave their registered place to live in the city without city registration are called the “floating population” (Solinger 1999; Meckenzie 2007; Li 2001) or more pejoratively, “*liumang*,” being treated as “outsiders,” “second citizens,” “surplus beings” (Dutton 2000). In contrast to nomads, an undifferentiated group detached from a place posing a social threat as well as revolutionary social change, *mangliu(liumang)*—literally meaning people “who have left, or been forced to leave, their own land”—are seen as engaging in no productive work, being out of place in the Chinese sense (Baoliang 1993). The floating population is portrayed as an “amorphous flow” of laborers who can be expelled at any time after being used; they are considered internal others, stigmatized for being dirty, poor, and uncivil, and are seen as quite distinctive from “native” urbanites (Li 2001; Chu 2009).

Their vulnerability is exacerbated by “exclusive inclusion” (Agamben 1998) and “forced flexibility” (Cho 2009). Deserting the farming land for the city without an official *Hukou*, these

rural migrants, as “peasants,”¹¹ are excluded from state protection and market activity, while at the same time they are included in the media and national narrative, as the poorest, most miserable group that the state can embrace, thus prescribing their right to be part of the city.¹² Under this regime of “exclusive inclusion” or “inclusive exclusion,” migrants attempt to transform themselves to become new urban subjects, inscribing civil, disciplined, productive, and responsible attitudes on their bodies and minds in order to improve their quality of life, *Suzhi* (Anagnost 2008; Chu 2009; Kipnis 2006; Li 2001; Ngai 2005; Yan 2009)¹³. The widening disparities between the poor and the rich, the rural and the urban, became attributed to “characterological traits,” and it was argued that the achievement of a “middle class” position as an ideal consumer-citizen can be enabled by “transformation of consciousness” (Anagnost 2008). The sharp distinction drawn between the urban and the rural has resonated at the heart of narratives of rural migrants adjusting to city life, as migration itself works as a means that solidifies the migrant’s role as “scale maker.”

Exploring the turbulence of migration that I have witnessed in the city of Yanji, I also found that the scale marker—such as urban and rural—is a determining force for and deeply imbedded in the subject-making process; who they are, where they are from, what they are supposed to do. To this discussion, I bring a transnational dimension and perspective intersected with internal migration, the intersection that is the site that jumping scales constantly

¹¹ Chu discusses the term *nongmin*, “peasant” in English, as a state identification that reeks of social and economic limitations. *Nongmin* conveys the stigmatic meaning attached to the “backward,” “superstitious,” and unproductive rural masses who are the major obstacle to national development and salvation. (Chu 2009:63)

¹² In addition to this “exclusive inclusion,” Cho elaborates, in her article, “*Forced Flexibility*,” how poor rural migrants’ desire to settle in either urban or rural areas is troubled and frustrated by conflicts over land rights in rural areas and policies that benefit urban household registration holders over rural people (2009; 53).

¹³ According to Anagnost, *Suzhi* appraises the biological individual’s embodied capacities looking at the body as a site of investment through entrepreneurialisation of the self (2008). The yearning for the self-development is attained by transformation of consciousness, Yan called “capitalization of subjectivity.”(2003a)

occur as a dominant condition of living in Yanbian. In reality, scale markers are more fluid and flexible than simple registry distinctions, such as urban/rural, national/transnational, and Korean ethnic town/Han Chinese town. In other words, various migrants—both Han and Korean Chinese—are jumping between multiple scales, thereby blurring their status as registered in *Hukou*¹⁴ and the distinction between national and transnational. For example, I met many Korean Chinese transnational migrants who carry farmer's *hukou* identification cards but carry on lives that go way behind the farm; they may own a house and farming land in the countryside of Yanbian, but they also may own one or more modern apartments in Yanji, while also renting a small room in Seoul. If they are better off, some Korean Chinese purchase new apartments in major Chinese cities with rising property values, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Qingdao, and rent them out as a source of income. These migrants are frequently moving back and forth between multiple places regardless of their originally registered status—whether as farmers or as urbanites. The scale marker, registration status, cannot fully capture who these migrants are, where they actually live, and what they really do. It is the new moment of mobility, as an old communist party member put to me; “now we (Korean Chinese) go to Korea as we go to *our place* (*naejip* in Korean) unlike when we were afraid of going there several decades ago (under the harsh Cold War circumstance)”

What follows is ethnography of the intersected traffic patterns and “jumping scales” of migrants who belong to multiple worlds in the moment of the post Cold War and postsocialism. These stories are especially about those who conceive of themselves as living on the margins of

¹⁴ As the urban migration has been rapidly increasing in China, *hukou* has become flexible and problematic in that it reveals the unequal access for migrants to reach the city resources and state benefits such as children's education and health care. To resolve the predicament that *hukou* imposes on migrants, cities such as Shanghai partially allows to issue the urban *hukou* to migrants on the limited condition; if migrants purchase a house or make investment of the certain amount (MacKenzie 2001). Since the permit is based on the economic potential, the urban *hukou* is still not easy for migrants to attain. The urban/rural distinction still remains.

Yanji, creating their own space with their own hands and hesitating between leaving and living in Yanji. Even the most vulnerable are able to “jump scales,” but scale jumpers still remain vulnerable.

2.2 To the City!

2.2.1 Entrepreneur Farmer

While I lived in Yanbian, I rented a room from a woman in her late forties, a former rice farmer in a “pure” Korean Chinese city named Huolong, one of several Korean Chinese condensed areas—along with Longjing and Tumen—long known for the vast extent and high quality of their rice fields. At the time I met her, she was running a rental comic book store next to an ethnic Korean middle school in the city of Yanji, targeting Korean Chinese middle and high school students as her main customers. On the first day of each month, I went to her bookstore to pay my rent as a regular tenant. She gradually told me her story over my multiple visits. I was struck by how badly she would fit the stereotype of farmers as “uncivil,” “uneducated,” and “narrow-minded.” She has a sharp financial mind and immense persistence, as witnessed by her ceaseless attempts to make the difficult transition from life-long farmer to successful businesswoman and city-dweller.

Growing up in a “pure” Korean Chinese town, my landlady became an expert rice farmer and married another farmer in the same town some twenty years ago. In fact, this couple seemed to be especially talented in profit-making; besides rice farming, they were running a store that mediated between rice farmers and wholesalers, collecting commissions by helping set up deals between these two parties. They were “getting rich first” indeed, as Deng promulgated in 1978, economically exceeding most farmers in their town. The couple’s financial stability allowed them to stay put even as the *Korean wind* swept across the town in the late 1990s, and

her neighbors became desperate to get to Korea. Unfortunately, however, my landlady then suffered a severe life tragedy: her husband was killed in a car accident, leaving her a widow in her mid-thirties with a daughter and a son to support. The loss of her husband tore her up emotionally. Moreover, her life as a farmer hit an impasse because she could not both work the farm and run the store by herself. Farming is work-intensive, based on a gendered division of labor, and requires too much work for one person to take care of all seasonal duties and chores in and out of the rice field. Faced with these problems, she made up her mind. “I could not be lost all the time because I had to take care of my children. I had to put myself together. I had to get the farm and the rice store back on track. In order to live, I decided to re-marry someone nice in town, although I knew my neighbors would whisper about my marriage behind my back. But I had to find a way out of the swamp.”

After she got remarried, she started living in two houses, one on Yanji, one in the countryside. That is because she wanted to send her two children to the first Yanbian high school, which is considered the best high school in Yanbian for Korean Chinese. She also wants to continue farming with her new husband. In order to live both in the city and the countryside back and forth, she said, “I had to become smarter about money.” The landlady re-arranged her money to invest in real estate, and bought a new apartment. It is very unusual in Yanbian for farmers to buy a new apartment in the city without first going to Korea to earn money. She soon bought two more apartments to rent out (including my one-bedroom apartment). She kept alerting me, “You should not talk about your room when we visit our town and meet my husband. He does not know anything about the house.” It seemed that the other apartments, and the rent they generated, belonged exclusively to her. She is also mostly self-responsible for *her* children’s care without getting any help from her new husband.

Her income was gathered from different sources. The rental apartments helped her to run and pay the rent for the comic book store. Second, the income from the bookstore enabled her and her two children to barely make ends meet in the city. At the same time, her new husband was taking care of her lands and rice store in the farming town. Her multiple “jobs” kept her busy. She was moving back and forth between different living places, between the countryside and city, as a farmer, landlady, and owner of a bookstore. During the busiest farming season, from June to August, she was in the farming town to help her husband. But the rest of the year she stayed in Yanji, supervising her children’s study while running the comic bookstore in the hope that would eventually be able to get her son into the right high school. Although she has successfully managed multi-tasking, the urban life costs much more than life in a rural town. In her home village, she did not have to pay for food, since everything was “right there”: she had enough vegetables and animals (pigs, chickens, and cows) on the farm to feed her family. She did not have to pay rent either, since the house and lands (which are rented from the government for 30 years) belonged to her, too. But in the city, as a farmer with no “work unit” benefit, food and rent and everything else had to be paid for out of pocket. Most of all, her children’s education heavily weighed on her shoulders, pushing her to collect rents as an extra source of income. Even multiple sources of income did not seem sufficient to catch up to the soaring expenses of maintaining the urban life and supporting her children’s education. She sometimes seemed to waver under the economic burden, saying, “If my younger son goes to college, I would like to go to Korea to make money. I might be better off that way than being stuck here doing so many different things. But until then I need to stay here to look after my children.”



Photo 6. Yanbian Countryside. By June Hee Kwon (2009)

Neither “poor” farmers nor relatively well-off urbanites have been immune to the *Korean wind* in Yanbian, in fact. My landlady, a farmer with an exceptional entrepreneurial sense, has witnessed many successful and failed cases of going to Korea. She continues to hesitate over whether or not she should go to Korea herself. She knows there is nobody who would look after her children if she went to Korea—since they are *her* children, she has take care of them, not her new husband. At the same time, whenever she feels that the cost of city life is too high, she starts considering the possibility afresh. She is well-off by the standards of her hometown and capable of multitasking as a farmer, landlady, and bookstore proprietor as she moves back and forth between Yanji and the countryside. Her story tells us that the scale of urban/rural, transnational/internal migration is not static, as she finds it possible to transgress with her

business sense and unceasing efforts to make ends meet. She is jumping scales in Smith's sense. Yet her fluid movements are not random, taking instead a particular, purposeful direction.

That is to say, she limits the scope of her actual and potential migration to Korean-speaking areas—Yanbian or Korea. Going to Chinese cities—*Han Caves*—has never been an option for her. Her hometown is a “pure” Korean Chinese town without a single Han Chinese household. As a result of growing up there, she never had a chance to interact with Han people or improve her Chinese language. Therefore, she feels very uncomfortable even in Yanji, where she frequently has to deal with Han Chinese whenever she goes on errands or does business. When she needs to meet people who speak Chinese, she frequently has to take her daughter, who is fluent at reading, writing, and speaking Chinese. Despite her successful real estate ventures, she feels as if she were illiterate in Chinese and this, in turn, makes her feel unfit for city life. She often told me that “as soon as I am done with my children, I will move back to the countryside where I do not have to speak Chinese.” Her background growing up in a “pure” ethnic town has limited her scope of migration based on linguistic boundaries.

And yet her desire for an urban life has been boosted by the ethnic education that the city of Yanji provides for her children. The condition of Korean ethnic schools in the countryside has become dismal as Korean Chinese have moved out and Han Chinese moved in. As a result of the sharply decreasing Korean Chinese population and the consequent shortage of Korean Chinese students in the countryside, Korean ethnic schools have begun to close. Moving to the city, then, has become an inevitable life choice for many Korean Chinese farmers, for the sake of their children's education. The economic burden of educating their children in the city certainly makes these farmers consider going to Korea, which is the easiest and the most definite option for overcoming the economic gap between the urban and the rural. That is

why the risks of going to Korea—the possibility of being cheated by illegal brokers and/or deported by the Korean government—are believed to be worth it.

The city of Yanji has posed an economic challenge to her. Although my landlady has been successful in managing her properties and business, the total income is still insufficient for her to survive the city and support the rising cost of education for her children. She enumerated her monthly income as follows, to demonstrate how tight her monthly budget is. Her collected rent was about \$200; \$100 from my room, \$100 from the other room. Her income from the bookstore was about \$200 per month. The income from farming was annual rather than monthly, so the total reliable income every month is \$400 without any extra social pension or benefits. This is a minimal amount of income compared to that of government workers, who average \$300 a month or more in Yanbian, in addition to benefits and job security. If my landlady went to Korea, she could make more than \$1200 per month, based on the current exchange rate (without taking into consideration the cost of living in Korea). Despite rapid economic development in China, the income gap between Yanbian and Korea remains large, in her case \$400 vs. \$1200. Based on the calculated numbers, my landlady, with her entrepreneurial sense, cannot but hesitate when confronted with the decision of whether or not to go to Korea. Not only farmers like her, but also Korean Chinese factory and *danwei* workers who have moved from the countryside to into Yanji all deem going to Korea as a route that offers the capacity to maintain the comforts of city life by overcoming the embedded distinction and discrimination between urban and rural people.

This move to the city has dramatically resulted in reshaping the ethnic composition in Yabian countryside. Many “pure” Korean ethnic towns have been struggling with a critical shortage of labor to take care of the land left behind by migrating Korean Chinese. Although

the land is not “owned” by individual farmers, but “rented” from the state for thirty years, it needs to be re-rented and cultivated by somebody when the original owners have left for the city or Korea. In fact, since most Korean Chinese prefer to stop farming and go to Korea in pursuit of lucrative transnational migration, Han Chinese farmers—who have a much slimmer chance to go to Korea—have started moving into these “pure” Korean Chinese ethnic towns in order to cultivate land “abandoned” by Korean Chinese. Some of these places, for example my landlady’s hometown, have refused to accept any influx of Han Chinese in the name of cultural autonomy, and to avoid potential ethnic conflicts with Han Chinese. But the dwindling numbers of Korean Chinese farmers make it highly unlikely that these towns can keep up this policy for long. The land needs to be taken care of and Han Chinese are willing to do it. My landlady, like other Korean Chinese, constantly warned of the Han Chinese threat. “We cannot hear a newborn Korean Chinese baby crying while Han Chinese are increasing,” she would say. “Korean Chinese land is taken over by Han Chinese. We are losing our land.”

Regardless of ethnic concerns, the desire for urban life is persistent, and the rapidly decreasing Korean Chinese population will not allow “pure” Korean Chinese towns to remain ethnically pure much longer. At the intersection of desire for urban life with desire for transnational migration, Korean Chinese farmers have come to believe that the cultural and economic gap between urban and rural to be bridgeable as long as they could make it to Korea. As many Korean Chinese migrants prove this social fantasy to be reality, the transnational migration becomes more and more accepted as an inevitable passage to a better life. In the ethnic hub in flux, surrounded by a transnational fantasy and its seductive potential, my landlady hesitated, wondering whether or not she should leave for Korea in search of a better life, leaving her children behind; what makes her hesitate is the large margin, \$400 vs. \$1200,

stemming from her calculation. That seems like a good sacrifice to invest for the children's future—or at least that is what she wants to believe when she considers the dangers and risks embedded in transnational migration. But she was still hesitating when I left Yanbian in the winter of 2009.

2.2.2 Laid-off Factory Worker

The ramifications of the *Korean Wind* are influential in the small industrial cities of Yanbian, too. The brief history of a border town, Yuejing, which I introduced in chapter one, will showcase the impact of economic reform and the open economy. On a sunny day of June 2009, I had a chance to spend time with local cadres of Yuejing. Cadre Yang invited me to a huge banquet, with local dishes and strong alcohol (*baijiu*) prepared by the female cooking staff working for the local government.¹⁵ Over lunch, served in a back yard of the government buildings, the head cadre shared with me his thoughts about the town's history and contemporary circumstances, and expressed his excitement about having a guest from Korea (meaning me). According to him, Yuejing was once one of the most prosperous towns in Yanbian, with a pulp factory employing ten thousand factory workers. But when economic reform arrived the factory, full of outdated machinery, had lost its competitive power and was shut down in 1997. As the town confronted the crisis, a wealthy Han Chinese businessman from southern China (vaguely indicated as *nanfang*) bought the factory at a low price from the local government, and started reorganizing and refitting it, bringing in new machines and letting 7,000 workers go. In fact, these layoffs—people called it “privatization”—had already been planned before the factory was sold. The work force had been half Korean and half Han Chinese, but in the whirlwind of rapid privatization, most of the Koreans got laid off or quit,

¹⁵ The gendered division of labor is very clear in Yanbian.

whereas the majority of the Han Chinese kept their positions at the factory. Some Korean Chinese workers who anticipated the approaching turmoil began to open their own businesses or prepared to leave for Korea. “The factory has now become a Han Chinese cave,” said the head cadre.

Under these large-scale dismissals, or *xiagang*¹⁶, Yuejing, formerly a prosperous border town proud of its enormous factory, rapidly decayed and declined, losing population and local businesses—grocery stores, restaurants, and so forth. Many of the former factory workers left for Yanji, either for better job opportunities or in the hopes of getting to Korea to make a larger amount of money in a shorter period of time. Either way was challenging to Yuejing Korean Chinese, coming as they were from a small border town. However, once the laid-off workers left Yuejing, they would never return to their hometown—now full of vacant houses. The head cadre lamented, “There was not much our government can do. There was no pulling power to keep people from leaving.” The cadres working for the local government received raises and better benefits every year, so he never personally considered going to Korea for money. But most farmers and laid-off factory workers had few other choices, except leaving Yuejing to search for work in Yanji or elsewhere.

While hoping to examine the relationship between the mounting unemployment rate and migration to Korea, I was fortunate to meet with several former factory workers who had been laid off by the pulp factory in Yuejing. Among them, I became closest with a woman

¹⁶ *Xiagang* (stepping down from the post), in fact, is the state of maintaining a contractual relationship with one’s enterprise (work unit) and retaining benefits. Thus, one is technically not fired, but the *xiagang* do not have jobs, either. Hung and Chiu discuss the predicament of *xiagang* workers in Beijing, calling them “the lost generation.” Given the historical turmoil in modern Chinese history that ranges from being “sent down to the village” (where education was poor or nonexistent) during the Cultural Revolution to the rampant privatization and loss of jobs in the contemporary era, Chinese of a particular age have turned out to be an especially “lost” generation, so “culturally malnourished” that they are more vulnerable than other age groups to economic dislocations and crises (Hung & Chiu 2003).

named Kim Meihua, who shared with me her insightful thoughts on China's economic reforms. Meihua, in her early forties, had worked in the pulp factory for fifteen years. She was the mother of a daughter who had just started middle school. I met Meihua at a social gathering in Yanji. Her family had lived in Yuejing for generations and her parents had also worked in the factory. In fact, she had inherited her mother's position.¹⁷ Meihua described her life as an ordinary woman of her age; after graduating from her (Korean ethnic) high school, she got a decent, reliable job, married, and gave birth to her daughter. But eventually she found that her husband was not as hardworking a person as she had thought. He quit several jobs and drifted around. One day, Meihua made up her mind to open a grocery store on the corner of their street. She imagined that her husband would take care of the store during the day while she went to work. That way he could have a job to stick to, and their income would be doubled, although she had to borrow money to open the store. Another reason that she wanted to open the grocery store was that she sensed that the factory would not last long. Her coworkers were talking about what they would do and where they would go if the factory eventually went bankrupt. Meihua felt that she had to start thinking of what to do before she lost job. Her response was to start the grocery store. The business had a nice kick off, and did well for the first couple of months. One day, however, Meihua discovered that her husband was having an affair with a neighbor. The affair led to divorce. This made her want to leave for Yanji in order to start a new life and offer a better education to her daughter. Her divorce seemed to hurt a lot,

¹⁷ The *danwei* system is the basis of the livelihood and employment security of the urban working class in China (Lee 2007); the flow of people is carefully monitored and rights of access strictly controlled, like a "gated community" (Anagnost 2008). Job security, housing, childcare and pensions are supplied through state-owned enterprises (Hung & Chiu 2003). Some have called this system "organized dependence" (Walder 1986) and "danwei welfare socialism" (Gu 1999). Parents' positions are frequently inherited by children, which functions as another form of job security.

but she tried to be calm about it. I asked how she felt when she first moved to Yanji. Her answer was a bit unexpected.

I really think it was great for the factory to go out of business. If the factory were still running, I would still be working in a small city on the border. Now I have come to Yanji and can see a bigger and different world from where I used to live. I love being in Yanji. There are a lot more things to learn and more chances to pursue. My daughter has a much better education because Yanji has better Korean ethnic school, better teachers than Yuejing. The collapse of the factory caused by *gaigekaiyang* (economic reforms and the open economy) turned out to be a great benefit to me.

Since coming to Yanji, Meihua has lacked a stable job because she does not have any special skills, so she has tried many different things in order to make ends meet. She has thought of going to Korea to make money, but decided not to because taking care of her young daughter was more important to her than making money. Most of all, her sister—who had already gone to Korea, and even opened a restaurant in Seoul—let Meihua stay in her apartment for free in exchange for taking care of her sister's son, who was a freshman in high school when I met Meihua. Because of her commitments, then, going to Korea was out of the question for Meihua.

Since she was relieved from the cost of housing, Meihua started looking for jobs she could do while taking care of two kids—one for herself, another for her sister. First, a friend introduced her to the Amway business, which was becoming popular in Yanbian. Meihua also sold life insurance, on a commission basis. Working as a sales person was suitable to her schedule because of its flexibility, which allowed her to raise the children while having multiple jobs. In addition, these did not require any higher education and they looked easy to tackle, at least to begin with. However, it turned out to be not easy at all to sell Amway products and insurance to strangers, as it was particularly difficult to convince people to buy products, and, especially, to keep them buying products as stable, returning customers. In order to foster these skills, Meihua was regularly attending classes offered both by Amway and by the insurance

company. The classes were about methods of persuasion, building self-confidence, and developing modes of self-management, as well cultivating the correct attitudes and behaviors for person-to-person sales.

One day, she invited me to her place and showed the class materials to me, explaining about the importance of having a positive attitude, citing her class lessons. She thought that if she really believed that “my business and the number of my customers will keep growing,” the belief would become reality, due to some form of self-conjuration. Yet she was basically a hard worker, too. Meihua was devoted to expanding her social networks, a crucial factor in both Amway and the insurance business (so-called pyramid schemes). She became a member of many online communities and participated in a multitude of social gatherings, as when we came to meet the first time. However, since she was a newcomer to the city, her business was not growing as she wished. Even though she was barely making ends meet, Meihua continuously insisted that she was “happy with being in Yanji. I am learning a lot. The quality of my life in Yanji is much better than when I was working at the factory.” Most of all, Meihua was proud that she could give her daughter a better education in Yanji.

Meihua’s move to Yanji shows the contradictory aspect of urban life after economic reform. She lost what was supposed to be a life-long secure in her hometown. However, this loss and the consequent insecurity came along with the opportunity that enabled her to emerge from a small and dilapidated border town to the larger, more cosmopolitan setting of Yanji. As she pointed out, “The collapse of factory turned out to be a great benefit.” The city life felt free, exciting, and unpredictable to her, compared to the same old, same old life in Yuejing. At the same time, however, her new life did not give her any job security. Relying on Amway and insurance sales did not allow her to make any reliable future financial plans. In addition, unlike

her life in Yuejing, Meihua now had to pay everything out of pocket even though she did not have to worry about housing, which she received in exchange for helping her sister pursue the Korean dream. Meihua badly wanted to be successful in business without doing menial work in Korea, working under Koreans. Meihua, as a single mother, certainly knew that she had to take care of her children. Eventually, however, she could not help considering going to Korea as a way to pay the price of the city life. She was hesitating by the time I left Yanbian in 2009. “I am not sure if I can support my daughter’s college education without going to Korea,” she finally admitted.

As I discussed in the previous section, going to Korea has been generally considered the most certain and promising method to make the city life possible and more prosperous, especially for those who dream about educating their children and buying an apartment in Yanji, and those who moved from outside of Yanji without guaranteed social and financial support. It has become very common for Korean Chinese households to rely on “Korean money” sent by somebody working in Korea. In the case of Meihua, her sister happens to be a sender of “Korean money,” which helps to sustain her city life via free rent. But the influx of Korean money has led to a surge in the cost of living and levels of consumption in Yanji; Yanji has become an “expensive” city to live in, given the income levels of its people. Many Korean Chinese migrants certainly wish to cut off the continuous cycle of migration between China and Korea and settle to rest from long exhaustive labor as a transnational worker. But these migrants also believed that there would be no better-paid jobs in Yanbian if work conditions were the same as in Korea. The income gap certainly drives the circuit of migration; Yanbian is a spending place whereas Korea is a working place (see chapter 4). These new urbanites, moving from rural or small-town Yanbian, need quick, plentiful money in order to support the

pricy urban life of Yanji. These desires and needs have directed the flow of Korean Chinese, especially to Korea, a place characterized by cultural and linguistic affinities to Yanbian, but also a considerable income gap from Yanbian. In Yanji, the *best* place for Korean Chinese to live, *as well as* a parochial ethnic enclave, many Korean Chinese continue to hesitate between living and leaving, which has become the condition of *mobile ethnicity*.

2.3 Ripple Effect

The impact of the *Korean wind* has been strong and multi-faceted. Most of all, economic achievement via emigration exacts a “cultural price” that threatens the local culture and value system (Fitzgerald 2009: 128).¹⁸ The cultural price is loaded in an idiom such as “*someone drinking the Korean water (Hankukmul mukda in Korean) would not want to work in China.*” The tone of mockery expressed by the phrase “drinking the Korean water” targets small but significant behaviors and manners of Korean Chinese returnees. For example, those who “drank the Korean water” wear clothes and make up like a Korean, but are not quite Korean. They mix a Yanbian accent with a Seoul accent, and thus they try to speak like Koreans, but cannot quite manage it. The attempt and failure to imitate Korean styles becomes an object for derision and taunts in Yanbian. Moreover, relentless imitation seems to be an evidential mark of “lacking.” Those who drank the Korean water are believed to spend a lot of money to show off, regardless of their actual economic status. The common belief is that as soon as they run out of money, they will go back to Korea, because there is nothing they can do to make that much money in China. Certainly, this is ethnic hyperbole built on contempt for those who are seen as

¹⁸ Fitzgerald discusses the “cultural price” of Mexican emigration to the US by looking at cultural dissimulation, such as losing Spanish language and converting from Catholicism to Protestantism. At the same time, Mexican emigration is considered as a route to acquire “culture” and modern labor discipline, forces seen as helping to modernize the local Mexican culture (2009). He states that “migration is a threatening conduit of cultural change” (135). I agree with this perspective, and yet, the case of Korean Chinese emigration has less to do with the state culture than with ethnic culture, unlike Mexican emigration as Fitzgerald discusses it.

drinking the Korean water. But the image of Korean Chinese as over-consuming is predominant and is projected even onto Korean Chinese children whose parents have gone to Korea. A Korean Chinese college student whose father went to Korea and made money there for a decade recalled his time in elementary school: “We could tell kids whose parents went to Korea from those who did not. Clothes, bags, shoes, and cellphones are the markers. They look just very different.” By contrast, a Han Chinese college student I met testified, “Korean Chinese students spend money like water. They eat out all the time. They wear expensive clothes and shoes. But since there is no parent to control their behavior, they are spoiled and free to do what they want. A lot of them get in trouble. In contrast, we Han Chinese cannot afford to do that, and we grow up under our parents’ protection, full of love.” In what follows, I explore how ethnic stereotypes have been solidified and how Han Chinese and Korean Chinese have differently perceived work and the future condition by Korean money and the possibility of going to Korea. Ethnic inter-dependence and inter-connection constitutes a new landscape for Yanbian, I argue.

2.3.1 Surplus but Lacking Labor

In contrast to my imagination, shaped as it was by the song “Everybody is Gone,” Yanbian was actually quite lively when I first visited in 2006. The “three industries” about which Mr. Wang joked were busy with crowds of customers. The amounts of money that young people spent every night in eating and drinking seemed to be beyond the average income level of Yanbian. Interestingly, those who spent money “like water” were accused of having “backup money” that their parents or partners had sent from Korea, and they were expected to pay for the night. But this backup money was also considered as a source of trouble for the Yanbian labor market, making Korean Chinese too lazy to work and unable to prepare for the future.

The assumption is that Korean Chinese would not want to work in China, since they could not make nearly the income that they could get in Korea. This seems symptomatic of what has been called a “dual frame of reference”(Piore 1979; Fitzgerald 2009), a term that explains how people assess their options in one labor market based on their experience in another, such as in the case of Mexico, where emigration is rampant and carries great consequences for local economies. The dual frame of reference is especially well exemplified by employers who rely on Korean Chinese labor. Mr. Shin, with whom I became close friends, provides some sharp insight on this question.

Mr. Shin, the owner of a coffee shop located in downtown Yanji, is from Korea, and has made a great economic success in running several restaurants in Yanbian. Mr. Shin, in his early forties, believed back in 2000 that China would be a rising global economy soon, and decided to come to Yanbian. Since Yanbian is the Korean Chinese Autonomous Prefecture, a place where Korean is spoken as the first language, he thought that his broken Chinese would not be a great obstacle. In fact, he married a Korean Chinese woman, who also has played a critical role in their restaurant businesses. Other Korean Chinese business people call him “Yanbian son-in-law” (*yanbian sawi* in Korean). Mr. Shin has targeted Korean Chinese young people, the majority of whose parents have worked in Korea, as his main customer group. This young generation of Korean Chinese enjoys Korean culture and mass media—music, movies, soap operas, clothing, and cosmetics—and accepts (and intensively consumes) Korean-ness as a familiar part of everyday life. Most of all, these Korean Chinese youngsters are dedicated customers, supplied with money sent from their parents in Korea. Given the specific characteristic of the Yanbian’s remittance dependent economy, Mr. Shin and two Korean friends started with a pizza restaurant in downtown Yanji in 2005, decorating it themselves.



Photo 7. One of Restaurant Run by Mr. Shin (2009)

He sold the idea of “modern” and “healthy” Korean food by juxtaposing “Korean culture” with the restaurant business. With a backdrop of Korean songs and Korean styles of decoration, friendly service and a pleasant environment has become a trademark of the restaurant. The restaurant is named *Happy Nara* (*happy country* in Korean), with distinctions such as a no smoking policy, in contrast to most Chinese restaurants in Yanbian. *Happy Nara* represents itself as “the Korean place,” providing Korean food culture and a Korean atmosphere. Whenever I went to the restaurant, it was always packed with young Korean Chinese—as well as a few young Han Chinese. As the restaurant has gained popularity in Yanbian, Mr. Shin has expanded his business to include a coffee shop, a “Korean-style” Italian restaurant, and a fried rice restaurant (which is a popular item in Korea). By the time I left Yanbian at the end of 2009, *Happy Nara* occupied three stories out of a four-story building, and had changed its name to *Happy Group*.

Despite his seemingly smooth journey to business success, Mr. Shin seemed worried about something. I asked what he was up to. He answered his employees often quite as soon as they obtain alternative or spare money to rely on. Then he has to find someone else to hire. “The most difficult thing about running a business in Yanbian is to find hardworking Korean Chinese waiters and waitresses (*funnyuan*) who will work for the long term.” Given that most customers are young Korean Chinese and the three owners are Korean, having Korean Chinese waiters and waitress seems to be essential in order to offer better customer service. Yet young Korean Chinese in their early twenties who worked at *Happy Nara* did not stay long. They did not work hard either, in Mr. Shin’s opinion. He explained:

Young Korean Chinese are not desperate to work hard because their parents send more money than the monthly salary they could make in Yanbian. We pay around 2,000 Yuan a month for *funnyuan*. This amount does not attract their interest at all. In general, parents working in Korea feel sorry about being separated from their kids in the name of making money. These Korean Chinese kids just get used to easy money from a young age. Wages of 2,000 Yuan a month is not bad by Yanbian standards, but they think it is too trivial to exhaust themselves for. Korean Chinese *funnyuan* quit all the time, making excuses about going to Korea or going to larger Chinese cities. So we just have to hire Han Chinese *funnyuan*. They will stay here and work for years. It is truly difficult for us to communicate with Han Chinese, due to the language barrier. But they are much harder working and more sincere. We do not have any other choice except to hire Han Chinese *funnyuan* right now.

Mr. Shin added that it was also hard to find middle aged Korean Chinese to hire, particularly women cooks. Most Korean Chinese working in *Happy Nara* considered their job nothing more than temporary work before they headed off to Korea. As soon as they got their work visas, these Korean Chinese *funnyuan* would leave Yanbian right away, Mr. Shin said.

Yanbian Korean Chinese have constantly been condemned for their lack of a work ethic—they would not seriously take jobs in China. “They keep thinking, if they go to Korea, they can make several times more than this,” Mr. Shin continued. “That is why they just cannot bear another moment of being here in Yanbian.” As a result, an employer like Mr. Shin is always in

the position of searching for new employees. “I think half of my time is spent to sort out new job applicants and interview them,” he said, sounding very frustrated. “Once the new hire stops working, I start searching again.” I met several other employers (Korean Chinese as well as Koreans) who, like Mr. Shin, professed themselves discouraged and unable to find devoted, long-term Korean Chinese workers.

These employers’ critiques of their prospective employees correspond with the dual frame of reference, the idea that if Korean Chinese go to Korea, they can make much more money than in China. Korean employers who I met often tried not to believe the firm ethnic stereotypes shaped by differentiated mobility—such as lazy Korean vs. diligent Han Chinese. But Mr. Shin and his colleagues easily come to prove the ethnic stereotype at work. For example, Korean Chinese think nothing of quitting to move to better paying jobs; Korean Chinese are dishonest when they manage company money; Korean Chinese are disorganized in their time and money management, in stark contrast to Han Chinese, who are hardworking and dependable. These problems are constantly traced back to one source: Korean Chinese have been spoiled by easy money sent from their parents or other family members. Put differently, sudden material affluence seems to trouble Korean Chinese youngsters’ work ethic; young Korean Chinese are so lazy and spoiled that they do not care much about their futures and careers. As Mr. Shin said, “There are so many Korean Chinese youngsters. But there are few who want to work.” There was, paradoxically, a lack of labor in what otherwise might seem to be a flood of surplus labor.¹⁹

¹⁹ In chapter 9, “The Rate of Surplus Value” in *Capital* vol1, Marx points out the contrast between necessary labor and surplus labor as following. “...I call the portion of the working day during which this reproduction takes necessary labor time, and the labor expended during that time *necessary labor*...During the second period of the labor process, that in which his labor is no longer necessary labor, the worker does indeed expend labor power, he does work but his labor is no longer necessary labor, and he creates no value for himself. He creates surplus value, which, for the capitalist, has all the charms of something created out of nothing. This part of the working day I call

Practically speaking, however, these “not working” Korean Chinese are neither simply lazy nor lacking in work ethic. In most cases, “not working” accompanies the special period of waiting to go to Korea. The “not working” Korean Chinese believe that not working is a better choice because they should be prepared to leave as soon as the visa is ready for them. All the potential hassles should be taken care of before the sudden departure occurs; the problem is that they do not know when exactly the pending visa will be issued. This is not a matter of the work ethic of individual Korean Chinese. Rather it is a consequence of the fact that Korean Chinese futures are structured on the basis of unpredictable visas to Korea—the constant, relentless waiting (see chapter 3).

I also found that the “not working” symptom is common in the countryside when I visited farming towns. Both rice and dry-field farming are too labor-intensive for one person to manage the entire field. If either a husband or wife goes to Korea, the farming itself cannot be continued by the other spouse alone. The field is then rented to Korean Chinese neighbors or incoming Han Chinese farmers. After this disposal of the farming land, the remaining partner has to wait for husband or wife to return to China, living on the remittances sent from the partner in Korea. Or, the waiting person him or herself must prepare to leave eventually for Korea to reunite with the other spouse. Given that farming relies on a seasonal cycle, the farming land should be rented²⁰ when the right person comes along to take over at the right

surplus labor time, and to the labor expended during that time I give the name of *surplus labor*.” (324-325) Marx’s concept of *surplus labor* helps me in two respects. First, I simply imply surplus labor as the *excess* and flood of laborers that do not want to take an active part in labor market of Yanbian, as Mr. Shin is concerned. Second, I view the non-working Korean Chinese, who are willing to participate in the Korean labor market, as sort of “reserve army” that is cheap source of labor, which enables to continue to produce surplus value. In fact, the excess of Korean Chinese who badly want to go to Korea and who already work in Korea keep the Korean Chinese wage low (\$1500-\$2000 level), leading to the constant labor exploitation.

²⁰ In China, farmers have a land-use right for thirty years. During the period of ownership, the land-use right can be rented to or passed over to other farmers, depending on the contract. But the property continues to belong to the local government, not to individuals (Oi 1991).

moment. The huge number of people “waiting” in this fashion persons all over Yanbian tend to be thought of as “not working”—when actually they are suspended in the liminal time and space between *living and leaving*.

Rampant Korean Chinese transnational migration has thrown Yanbian into flux, redefining many characteristics of the ethnic zone. Han Chinese have moved into Yanbian in a quest for new jobs as a “floating population,” “ethnic others,” or “ethnic minorities.” On the one hand, these newcomers have caused ethnic discomfort to Korean Chinese who have been embraced by ethnic comfort for a long time. On the other hand, these “ethnic others” emerge as an essential labor pool to serve the Korean Chinese customers who enjoy the growing service sector in Yanbian, such as Mr. Wang’s “three industries.” The next section tells the story of how the Han Chinese have responded to the Korean wind and Korean money.

2.3.2 Korean Chinese Customer vs. Han Chinese *Dagong*

To many Korean Chinese returnees, Yanbian does not feel like “home.” One of the reasons is that they are surprised at the dramatic increase of Han Chinese population in Yanbian, compared to when they left a decade ago. It is very typical to see Korean Chinese customers served by Han Chinese *funnyuan* (service people). Among the entertainment and service industries, massage parlors, one of the “three industries,” needs special attention here because it has attracted Han Chinese *dagong* (workers) from all over China. In Yanbian, a massage parlor is a common spot for people to visit with friends after gathering or drinking. Some massage places provide sexual services. But most massage parlors do not—they are very public and open for 24 hours, with multiple customers getting massages at the same time in the same room, often with friends. The customers—young and old, women and men—stream in constantly, day and night. While I was in Yanbian, I went to massage parlors with Korean

Chinese friends many times as part of the routine itineraries of gatherings, which included drinking, eating, karaoke, massage, skewered lamb([羊肉串](#) *yangrouchuan*), and sauna.

Hearing about the high demand for massage services in Yanbian, many Han Chinese masseuses have moved into Yanbian—a kind of dream place for them, where they can make even more money than in larger Chinese cities, and with a lower cost of living. In practice, however, working conditions are not even close to dreamlike. They must work for twelve hours a day, with only two official days off a month. The income is unpredictable because it depends on the number of customers they serve. Waiting for random customers to come to pick them, these masseuses sleep curled up at work, sharing a large resting room with dozens of other masseuses. Night customers who visit after drinking and karaoke at 2 or 3 AM interrupt their sleep. Popular masseuses are frequently called by regular customers and make more money than those who are not often called. But they are always tired from lack of sleep, their *qi* (energy) and health suffering badly. They have to disregard their fatigue, as the key in this business is to make new customers into returning regulars (*dangou*), so as to maximize the predictable income.

I had chances to talk with several male masseurs from different regions of China. Many were *dongbei* (from Jilin and Heilongjiang), but there were also some from Anhui, Shandong, and Sichuan. After several visits I became friends with one, a Han Chinese I knew only as “Number 5.” Number 5, in his early twenties, came from a small rural town in Heilongjiang (in the northern part of Northeast China). After he graduated from middle school, he was not sure what to do. He did not want to be a farmer like his parents. He heard that massage could be a good way to make money, and Yanbian was recommended as a good

place to go if he has developed good skills. One day, I ended up having an interview-like conversation with Number 5, and this is some of what he told me:

I heard that I could make decent money if I go to Yanbian. It is because people in Yanbian, in particular Korean Chinese, like to spend money they earned in Korea. I do not have much education or special skills. Thus I decided to learn to do massage in order to go to Yanbian. It is decent money, but a tiring job. Most of my customers are Korean Chinese. But most masseuses here are Han Chinese. Korean Chinese would not want to do tiring work like this because they think they can go to Korea to make better money. But Han Chinese don't expect to go to Korea or to make big money all at once. Also, Han Chinese customers are not coming to get massages because they are very stingy. Only one out of ten customers is Han Chinese. The rest are Korean Chinese.

Yanbian might not be the only “dream place” among masseuses, but Number 5’s testimony helps us understand how Yanbian is imagined elsewhere: as a hotbed of consumption driven by Korean money and Korean Chinese extravagance. In addition, the informal statistics on massage consumption suggested by Number 5 demonstrate ethnic distinctions between Han Chinese and Korean Chinese. He, along with other masseurs and masseuses, assumed that Korean Chinese make money in Korea and spend it quickly, relying on more backup money—the remittances.

Number 5 told me that he had a difficult time when the financial crisis hit the Korean economy badly in 2008. Remittances dropped off sharply, and some migrant workers and their families tried not to exchange Korean money into Chinese yuan, preferring to wait till the rate became more favorable.²¹ As a result, the economy of Yanbian was frozen, lacking the generous cash flows that had been a major driving force for its service-centered economy. Responding to the economic crisis, Number 5 reinforced the significance of remittances for

²¹ According to Yanbian customs statistics, until 2008, a billion dollars a year in remittances had been flowing from Korea to Yanbian. But in 2008, it dropped to about seven hundred million dollars when the financial crisis brought with it a sharp depreciation of the Korean currency. The value of the Korean won has bounced back, from 10,000 won: 40 yuan in 2008 to 10,000 won: 58.90 yuan in 2011. As the Korean currency showed increased strength, Korean Chinese rushed to exchange the won into Chinese yuan (*Yeonhap News*, May 1, 2011).

his own earnings. “The more remittances get sent, the more money gets made in Korea, the more Korean Chinese customers are coming to get my massages.” It is undeniable that remittances have generated these entertainment industries and sustained a large part of the Yanbian economy, with its focus on spending rather than making, consuming rather than working (see Chapter 4). The critical point made by Number 5 is about the Han Chinese migrant worker’s connection to and dependency on the remittance-driven economy. He brings to the fore the intimately intertwined consequences of Korean money, not only on Korean Chinese migrants and their families, but also on Han Chinese business people and *dagong* (workers) who rely on the influx of remittances for their incomes. In other words, Number 5 implies, when remittances decline, the whole economy of Yanbian, sensitive to their fluctuating flows, becomes vulnerable. Despite their differentiated mobility, both Korean Chinese and Han Chinese are swept up in the turbulence of migration, the migration that has actively altered the conditions of everyday life and reshaped the urban landscape of Yanji.

At the same time, Number 5’s insight pushes us to rethink the impact of fluctuating flows of Korean money in conjunction with global economic crisis. The Korean crisis was instigated mainly by the weakened US economy. In 2008, Korean financial markets, closely tied to the US market, tumbled when the US market collapsed. Many Korean companies ended up going bankrupt. The unemployment rate was at a record high. The service sectors that were occupied mostly by Korean Chinese shrank. The sharp depreciation of the Korean currency value slowed down the export of goods. In this economic turbulence, the devalued Korean currency especially affected Korean Chinese migrant workers, as they became victims of the instability of the currency rate—the total amount of remittance varies according to the currency rate of the day. Since the currency rate was disadvantageous to Korean Chinese

migrants in 2008 and 2009, their total income was cut in half as the Korean currency showed constant weakness against the dollar.

On the other hand, the Chinese economy stayed relatively strong in the midst of the crisis under the state's support of economic growth and protection of the currency rate.

Korean Chinese migrant workers began to return to Yanbian because they could not make as much as before. These returnees tried to seek the *Chinese dream*, starting new businesses in order to be part of the booming economy of China. At the same time, they were constantly frustrated by their inability to catch up with the rapid social changes that had occurred while they were away (I describe the returnees in Chapter 6 as existing "between two dreams").

Staying in Yanbian in 2008 and 2009, I met many returnees who were suffering from deep anxiety and frustration, uncertain of the best path for their future, unsure of where to settle down. After much contemplation and hesitation, the majority of Korean Chinese ended up going back to Korea, their once and future "dream place." The income gap between China and Korea is not as vast as before, and the economic benefits from transnational migration are not quite as promising. Some migrants told me that they are too old or too late to join the Chinese economic boom. Others said that they just got used to working in Korea as physical laborers, and enjoyed the regular income. The Korean dream is gradually waning while the Chinese dream is still emerging. It might be the time to write that the fifth wind is the *Chinese Wind*.

2.4 Conclusion

Focusing on differentiated mobility by ethnicity and the turbulent effects of the *Korean wind*, I have examined the intersection of internal migration, transnational migration, and remittance development occurring in Yanbian for the last twenty years. I have argued that

ethnic groups have developed different ranges and routes of mobility and, consequently, different life choices. I also have argued that mobility brings interconnection between ethnic groups and mutual dependency on the remittance economy under the influence of Korean money. Throughout the chapter, I have highlighted the particular hesitation between living and leaving, as “jumping scales” becomes a common mode of life.

I wrap up this chapter with an anecdote of an encounter with a Han Chinese taxi driver who showed strong pride in the global economic rise of China. As soon as he noticed that I was Korean, he made the following confident declaration: “I am sure that China will be the greatest and strongest country in the world in ten years. We will exceed America, too. Let me predict, Koreans will come to China as *dagong* to make money in ten years as we, Chinese have gone to Korea as *dagong* to make money. Things will reverse soon as China rises.” Time and again, I have encountered this version of confidence in the Chinese future. This sort preening became stronger and stronger after the global financial crisis ruined the promise of the Korean dream. I came increasingly to believe that Yanbian has entered a phase of transition to *the Chinese wind*, (see chapter 6), despite the vibrant remittance economy still generated by money from Korea.

Chapter 3. *Labor of Love*: The Economy of Waiting and Affective Currency

*Everybody is Gone*¹

Wife is gone, husband is gone, and uncle is gone
Everybody is gone, to Korea, to Japan,
To America, to Russia, to make money
Everybody is separated and crying
What does life mean, we are all broken down
Why are we sick of missing each other,
We are waiting to live together sometime in the future

On a sunny day in May 2009, I had a chance to go hiking with a group of Korean Chinese. As I mentioned in chapter 1, hiking became a part of my routine weekly schedule and a major opportunity for participant observation, as it allowed access to Korean Chinese everyday life and personal stories. Since Yanbian's spring comes in late April due to the region's fairly cold climate, the hikers considered the two months of springtime—May and June—as the best season to see flowers bloom. My hiking trips, with various groups, were concentrated during this period. To me, the most exciting moments in hiking were the lively conversations over lunch, once we arrived at the peaks of mountains. Of all the hikers I came to know during the weekly trips, I became particularly close to a leader of one of the groups, Mr. Ho, who worked as a high-ranking official in the publishing field. At this time, too, Mr. Ho, who was good at creating a friendly and lively mood, started a lunch conversation by telling us about his story as *botoli*, the Yanbian term for Korean Chinese wives or husbands who have been waiting for their partners to return from Korea—sometimes for as long as a decade. The conversation continued among the hikers:

Mr. Ho: After my wife went to Korea ten years ago, I became so lonely that I drank a lot—almost every day. The heavy drinking gradually ruined my body. In

¹ The song is a popular song widely known in Yanbian, expressing the feeling of rampant migration. It was made in 2006.

Yanbian, there are so many lonely husbands without wives. What can we do, go home where there is nobody waiting for us? Drinking is my friend as well as my excuse not to go back home early. But since I started hiking, I have cut down on my drinking and gotten healthier.

Hiker 1 [enviously]: But your wife sends the remittances on a regular basis, right? How many houses do you own right now?

Hiker 2: Nowadays, we should think we're happy if we're not divorced, if we own a house or two, if our kids have grown up without causing serious trouble, and if the remittances are still being sent. That's a successful family; that's the Korean dream.

Mr. Ho: You guys are right. But waiting for your wife for more than ten years is not an easy task. There's a reason why Korean Chinese get together for hiking or drinking or other leisure activities—it's because they're too lonely. Look at Yanbian. Everybody's gone to Korea to make money. I don't expect anything more except that my wife eventually returns. After ten years of waiting for my wife, I happen to believe that, as long as money is sent back, there might still be love.

This conversation captures the common anxieties about long-term transnational migration in Yanbian, especially in relation to remittances and love. Ms. Yun, a journalist for the Yanbian Radio Station, had introduced me to Mr. Ho, and he was very curious about and supportive of my research from the beginning. He in turn introduced me to other highly ranked members of the Yanbian government and the Communist Party, and brought me to many different social gatherings, mostly large banquets involving heavy drinking with his friends. He invited me to his 60th birthday party, which is considered as an important turning point in the Korean culture. He introduced me to every single friend of his at the party—mostly Korean Chinese writers and journalists. He also arranged an interview for me with his mother who was a deeply committed Communist Party member, particularly during the Chinese War of Liberation² before the new China was officially established in 1949. While accompanying

² Mr. Ho's mother was one of the early Communist Party members who participated in the liberation war. She did not speak Chinese at all when she became a Chinese nurse army. "The nursing school during the war was a great school for me," she said, "teaching the Chinese language as well as medical knowledge. I was illiterate in both



Photo 8. Hiking Trip. By Baishan(2009)

me to the most of the interviews and gatherings he arranged, Mr. Ho told me, “ I want to collect new stories and get to know many different things in the world as a writer. I also want to learn more about Korea, America, and different worlds from you, Juni.” Mr. Ho thought of me as a messenger coming from some other world. He wanted to know what America looks like, how Americans behave, what they eat, what their sexual relationships are like, and so forth. I had to answer him somewhat vaguely, explaining that I did not know the American culture in detail, being a foreigner there myself. He also wanted to know about Korea. In most

Chinese and Korean because I had no schooling because of the severe poverty of my family. Also, my father thought women should not go to school, although I badly wanted to,. My brothers were educated, of course. Because of my illiteracy, I had to memorize everything in nursing school, without being able to read at all. But I was first in the class.” She has always been a dedicated Communist Party member. She kept saying to me, “We should admit that we cannot be better off without the help of South Korea,” meaning migration there to work. Her daughter, her son, and her daughter-in-law (Ho’s wife) have all been working in Korea for years.

of our conversations Mr. Ho and I focused on comparisons among different cultures, always returning to the problems of Korean Chinese in reaction to the *Korean wind*.

Not only curious, Mr. Ho is a friendly and witty storyteller. In fact, he is the author of three books, one of them the winner of an important literary prize for Korean Chinese writers in Yanbian. As a former factory worker in the publishing field, official recognition of his work means a lot to him. He was able to emerge from the ranks of ordinary laborers to become an important official (*ganfu*), but never gave up his dream to become a writer, a dream he had nurtured from his twenties. Writing novels occupies his mind and life as a core project alongside his main profession. He was also a great facilitator in the interviews he set up for me, breaking the ice and getting to the point as soon as possible. Most of all, Mr. Ho guided me through the local social setting, which would be hard for me to navigate without a (Korean Chinese) native's invitation. In so doing, he embraced and situated me in a particular position as a "Korean" researcher and student who studies in an American university, working on "*our*" ethnic problem. He emphasized the ethnic bond—"we ethnic Koreans"—while his mother treated me as if I were a family member because I had the same last name as hers. The bonds that Mr. Ho helped me establish undeniably expedited and expanded my field research and my social network in Yanbian.

Despite his curiosity and extroverted personality, and his emphasis on the ethnic bond between us, he never told me that much about his wife, who had been working in Korea for years. His witty statements were made mostly from a third-person point of view, leaving a certain distance from his own life as *botoli*. His mother also kept quiet about her daughter-in-law in Korea on the several occasions when I spoke with her about the Liberation War and her life. I became increasingly curious about his secretiveness regarding his wife. After a year

of virtual silence on the subject, however, Mr. Ho finally opened up, just as I was finishing my field research in Yanbian.

Looking back at my discussions with Mr. Ho, I kept wondering what made him so reluctant to tell me his own story, even as he told me so many stories about other people. How should I understand his ebullient social life juxtaposed with his secretive and underplayed personal life? How could he reconcile his public career as a Communist Party member and an officially recognized Korean Chinese ethnic writer with his years spent waiting for his wife and her money from Korea, a country that had been officially considered a capitalist enemy for much of his life? These questions continued to linger with me throughout my research as I came to recognize how difficult it was to hear and gather *waiting stories* told in the first person, despite the rampancy and omnipresence of such narratives in Yanbian. This chapter addresses my ethnographic challenge through a reading of two waiting stories spoken in the first person.

Zooming into the intimate domain of long-term, long-distance marriage relationships transformed by transnational migration, in this chapter I aim to understand the particular structures of feeling and personal emotional and economic strategies engendered by the temporality of *waiting* for remittances and beloved ones, from the point of view of those who wait. Staging the context that the moral and sexual anxiety of waiting stories has arisen from a setting of Korean Chinese ethnic migration to Korea, I point to *waiting* as a core and intrinsic condition that sustains the economy of migration. Here, I develop two interconnected arguments. First, I argue that waiting for money, and the partner, is an *affective labor* that can generate either a binding or a disintegrating force between the two separated parties. I understand an affective labor that includes an immaterial labor dealing with information and

communication. It also aims to turn to a feeling of ease and well-being, as in person service and caring service (Hardt & Negri 2000). Taking *caring* as a key element of affective labor, I investigate *waiting while caring* for love and money as a immaterial but productive labor in that the *caring while waiting* constitutes an essential part in serving better future and maintaining a long-term and long-distance transnational migration. Second, I argue that remittance is an *affective currency* that effects the transformation of individual intimate relationships and social dynamics. As a hiker illustrate at the beginning, Korean Chinese in Yanbian have accepted remittance as an evidence of love as well as an affective medium to transfer love in the uncertain and vulnerable intimate relationship. In doing so, I analyze the story of a film, *Let the River Run*, in which a father and son are both waiting for the wife and mother who has been working in Korea. Later, I explore two personal waiting stories, of a husband (Mr. Ho) and a wife (Ms. Li), respectively, stories that tell us about the anxiety, anticipation, betrayal, and vulnerability involved in waiting for money and love. My focus is on methods of caring for money and love, or what I call the *labor of love*.

3.1 Emergence of Anxiety: Money and Love

Before I get to the actual waiting stories, I would like to discuss the anxiety embedded in Korean Chinese transnational migration, and its particular context. This is to understand the specific reasons for emerging moral and sexual tensions entailed in Korean Chinese transnational migration. First, the anxiety derives from the embedded illegality of much of the migration. Since the Korean government has issued work visas to Korean Chinese on the basis of kinship, Yanbian Korean Chinese, whose ancestors moved mostly from North Korea, cannot rely on kinship connections to South Koreans, and thus have instead faked kinship using illegal brokers—what I called “paper kinship” in chapter 1. Counterfeit documents have

enabled these migrants to get into Korea, where they tend to immediately fall into undocumented status. A majority of Korean Chinese migrants have been penalized and stigmatized as illegitimate workers, and are constantly anxious about possible deportation.

Second, another practice that has facilitated Korean Chinese illegal migration is fake marriage between Korean and Korean Chinese, a method that is especially reliant on the concept of Korean ethnic affinity. The manipulation of marriage in the pursuit of migration and money has become a critical subject that has stirred and destabilized Korean Chinese family and intimate relationships, often referred to as an “ethnic crisis” or “marriage in crisis.” In Yanbian, people believe that *love is in crisis*, having become subject to the power of money generated by the *Korean wind*.

The “crisis” has been mainly conditioned by cultural preferences that have uniquely favored ethnic marriages between Korean Chinese and South Koreans. In particular, fake marriage has been practiced as the easiest way for middle-aged Korean Chinese women to get into Korea. Yet many cases have shown that fake marriages—which frequently involve divorcing a “real” Korean Chinese husband in order to marry a “paper” Korean husband—tend to result in real divorces. The rise in such “immoral” activities—especially abandoning a “real” Korean Chinese partner—has been received as an ethnic moral crisis. Yet the moral standard is dubious in Yanbian; these Korean Chinese are considered as immoral pursuers of mere material obsession (“*money-money*”), while at the same time it is understood that choosing this pathway is an often unavoidable part of planning for a better future. In the context of the *Korean wind*, fake marriage between Korean and Korean Chinese exposes fault lines of cultural and social anxiety.

Finally and foremost, “money from Korea” is the essential flash point for moral and sexual tension between two parties living in two different countries. As the conversation that I opened this chapter showed, “Where money goes, love is”; the flow and friction of remittances—how much money is sent, and how frequently, and whether plans and expectations have been met—are crucial in maintaining long-term and long-distance relationships. The hikers half-jokingly told me that remittances sent on a regular basis are evidence of “love” and togetherness, and that saving and not squandering remittances will bring more remittances because it inspires trust in the sender. The chained sources of anxiety—illegal entry, the high probability of a partner’s affair, the sending and receiving of remittances—have shaped and reshaped the intimate relationships and material conditions of Yanbian Korean Chinese.

This widespread and commonly observed moral and sexual anxiety—*love in crisis*—among Korean Chinese is closely overlapped with discussions about the commodification of love and care as “the new gold” (Constable 2009; Parrenas 2001; Sassen 2000:2004; Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2004). The commodification of love has thrived on the development of international “marriage markets” (Constable 2003, 2005a; Freeman 2005, 2006; Piper&Roces 2003) and Internet dating sites (Constable 2007b; Tyner 2009) in a transnational setting. Love is not simply a force for creating interpersonal ties (Fromm 2006(1956)) but rather a means of producing value that is then circulated on the market. Nicole Constable examines the “commodification” of love on a global stage, describing the ways in which intimacy or intimate relations can be treated as if they have entered the market, and bought or sold as part of the global capitalist flow of goods (Constable 2009). The Korean Chinese case is no exception to this sort of commodification, especially in its use of marriage

as a key method of making and faking kinship (Freeman 2011). The true intention of any Yanbian/Korean marriage tends to be called into question; it is assumed to be a savvy gesture practiced for the sake of money in both Yanbian and Korea—regardless of what the partners may say or think themselves.

These recent anthropological studies on gendered transnational migration document the tension that love entails, looking at intimacy and intimate relationship as a core site, not only as a means but also as an end for transnational migration.³ For instance, in the Dominican Republic, sex workers rely on unpredictable transnational intimate relationships with foreign tourists, the relationships growing from sex transactions. The sex workers attempt to perform being in love with these tourists, often with the goal of marrying them. Marriage is a viable means to get a legitimate visa to leave the impoverished home country in order to make money, which is then sent back to take care of the family left behind. “Marriage as transaction”, in Brenna’s terms, serves as a survival as well as advancement strategy, allowing escape from their precarious present lives (Brennan 2004). In the case of marriage relationships between Japanese men and Filipinas, Faier argues that love is a “global self-making” term that makes possible the transnational tie via international marriage and send money (remittances) back home (Faier 2009). In contrast to manipulating marriage as a simple means to make money or obtain a visa—“marriage as transaction”—the emphasis on love by the Filipina brides delivers a moral sense of self and cosmopolitan, modern personhood, a sense that ties them to their Japanese families and Japanese morality.

³ Filipina migrants make money and take care of their own families by emigrating to take care of other families in other countries. The massive Filipina migration has transformed the Philippines into a labor-exporting country that now suffers from a “care crisis” (Parrenas 2001). In this discussion, the focus is not on the sexual transaction, but on the global chain of care shaped by transnational migration.

These ethnographies commonly show that love—as one thread in a web of transnational practices—emerges as a contentious site that demonstrates “global hypergamy” (Constable 2005), or women marrying up into higher socioeconomic groups. They also illustrate love as a site for the production of value and a new condition of possibility, by reorganizing love alongside money and vice versa on the global level. Here, transnational migration has formulated a “chain of love”(Parrenas 2004) that develops the exchange value of care and love on a global scale, the value extracted from poorer countries to richer ones at low cost (Constable 2009). These transnational practices are made possible by intimate relationships, just as the intimate relationships have been reorganized by transnational practices, as Faier suggests (Faier 2007)

My investigation of the *labor of love and remittance* is built on transnational studies of the commodification of love, and the contentious relationship between love and money on a global scale. My ethnography on the transformation of intimacy also stays focused on the affective aspects of transnational migration, underscoring that transnational labor is initiated and maintained in the name of *love*—either as family duty or as economic betterment. At the same time, my approach to this tension is a bit different from that of other scholars, in that I pay special attention to the temporality of *waiting* both for money and love, and the derived fear and anxiety implicit in the *Korean wind* from the perspective of those waiting in Yanbian—those who are not actually migrating, but who sustain the other pole of migration as key agents in the constant circulation of labor. What is the role of remittance in transnational economic and intimate life? What kind of transfer is remittance: is it gift or money? What is taken or given between the two parties, the sender and receiver of remittances? What if the exchange, and the way to a better life, fails or is betrayed in some fashion? How does *love* work

in this anxious and fearful situation; what is the *labor of love*? In answering these questions, I trace the complex fabric of anxiety built on waiting and remittances, highlighting the particular temporality structured by Korean Chinese migration and deeply entrenched as a part of everyday life in Yanbian.

3.2 Waiting and Remittances

When I visited Yanbian for the first time in 2006, the entire region felt like a “waiting room,” full of both anticipation and fear of possible disappointment. Waiting was omnipresent; I met many Korean Chinese—wives and husbands, grandfathers and grandmothers, sisters and brothers, daughters and sons—who had been waiting for years for money and family members to return from Korea, much like Mr. Ho. I also met Korean Chinese who badly wanted to leave Yanbian for Korea, Japan, or America, waiting to get their applied visa issued (as portrayed in chapter 2). Of course, the long and sometimes desperate waiting does not always come to fruition. For instance, the remittances could stop; the partner could stop communicating, or disappear without leaving a word; the visa broker could turn out to be a professional swindler; long-gone parents could abandon their children without providing decent support. Beset by multiple forms and durations of waiting, Yanbian seemed like a “lobby” where all one could do was to wait to be called (Mattingly 2010:8). Yanbian was also like a place of “dwelling-in-travel” (Clifford 1997:2), with everyone always on the verge of that next move.

Hearing stories of waiting awash in anxiety and expectation over and over, I found that one of the most common fears among Korean Chinese migrant spouses waiting for the partner was, “*What if my partner has an affair*” (*baramnada* in Korean⁴)—with either a Korean or a

⁴ *Baram*’s literal meaning in Korean is “wind.” *Baramnada* means that people go out and wander with another partner, having an affair.

fellow Korean Chinese migrant. There are numerous cases where Korean Chinese migrants have stopped sending remittances and broken off contact after starting another life with a new partner in Korea. In this context, a break-up can be a critical, life-threatening event, as it results not only in the loss of the relationship, but also in exposure to economic vulnerability for the partner waiting for and relying on the remittances.

In a fragile, vulnerable long-term and long-distance relationship, waiting for remittances needs special consideration, since the remittance is generated by deferring the present togetherness of the couple. The remittance is sent to support the family back home in the name of love, so the personal attachment to the money is still vivid. On the other hand, the remittance is also an impersonal form of money that is simply used to buy things. However, the remittance requires special treatment; it needs to be wisely used, cared for, and invested to create more wealth and a better future. The remittance transfers not only the value of the money but also a sense of care for the partner and the relationship itself, which is sustained through the separation that brings the remittance. Deferral and waiting are key to the temporality of remittances, and the anxiety in this particular exchange needs special attention. Here, money as a form of remittance is a dubious medium; it provides the means of practicing moral responsibility for one's family and its future, while at the same time, money can be a destructive source of sexual tension, forcing couples apart for long periods of time. This moral and sexual anxiety has been aggravated by the persistent influx of remittances as a main economic generator in Yanbian for the last twenty year.

The anxiety embedded in exchange is not new in theoretical discussions. Here, Marx's early writing is useful in understanding the force of money—both constructive and destructive.

The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money's properties are my properties and essential powers—the properties and powers of its possessor. Thus, what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women. Therefore, I am not ugly, for the effect of ugliness—its deterrent power—is nullified by money...does not my money therefore transform all my incapacities into their contrary? (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p 138, Marx)

This paragraph captures the subordination of individual feelings to money in dramatic ways.

Money makes it possible to transform an ugly man into a powerful one who can overcome his ugliness. Money as impersonal but objective medium of value exchange is now intimately mediated in the human relationship. Money even appears to transform feelings, personal ties, and subjectivities.⁵ And yet, the potential of money is not always creative or binding. It possesses destructive power as well. Marx continues,

If money is the bond binding me to human life, binding society to me, binding me and nature and man, is not money the bond of all bonds? Can it not dissolve and bind all ties? Is it not, therefore, the universal agent of divorce? It is the true agent of divorce as well as the true binding agent—the universal galvano-chemical power of society (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p 138, Marx)

The destructive power of money is inherent in its ability to move between realms, both joining and cutting human ties. The power of money also converts human desire into reality, “from imagination to life, from imagined being into real being. In effecting this mediation, money is the truly creative power.” (139). Money's force of creative destruction can overthrow the social relationship. Here, the potency of exchange is not understood as the extension of the self into thing in the realm of exchange. Rather, money directly transforms human bonds through an intimate and dramatic engagement in the relationship between subjects. Money

⁵ Simmel makes similar point regarding money. To him, money is a medium circulating between the subjective desire and desirable objects in the realm of exchange, without paying much attention to production and human labor. As a mere medium of exchangeability (130), money enables an impersonal bond between subject and thing. While leaving the chasm unfilled between the subject and the thing, the relationship between subjects remains impersonal and detached, which contrasts with Marx's view of money as the personal and attached means of power as well as a means of exchange and the garnering of wealth.

arouses anxiety about uncertain consequences; we cannot know what changes money will bring about in transforming human bonds.

Whereas Marx highlights the transformative and unpredictable force of money and related anxiety, Mauss points out the anxiety from the point of view of the expected mutual obligation and anxious waiting related to the return of the gift in time. The gift exchange between two different parties aims to inscribe personal ties in mutual obligations and debts in order to prolong the relationship. To Mauss, the gift is not a mere thing attached to a person, but rather assumes a wholeness deeply connected with “souls”—“souls mixed with things, things mixed with souls” (Mauss 1990:20)—“the spirit of the gift.” This “indissoluble bond of a thing with its original owner” (Mauss 1990; Gregory 1982:18) makes the gift inalienable by imposing on the receiver the obligation to return. Therefore, the gift exchange is not an instant one-time trade, but a repetitive and constant exchange because the return is always anticipated. Until the return is completed, the gift remains a debt—it drives a “debt” or “loan” economy (Gregory 1982; Derrida 1994). In the gift economy, life is intermingled with things through a strict contract—“the time limit.”

These are the notion of credit, of the time limit placed on it, and also the notion of honor. Gifts circulate as we have seen in Melanesia and Polynesia, with the certainty that they will be reciprocated. Their “surety” in the equality of the thing given, which is itself that “surety.” But in every possible form of society, it is in the nature of a gift to impose an obligatory time limit (Mauss 1990:35).

A gift received “with a burden attached” (41) should be returned on the basis of the term—the time limit. The presupposed “certainty” between two parties is key to maintaining the relationship. When the return does not take place at the given time, the potential for rivalry and hostility within the contractual relationship is revealed. Derrida develops the significance of reciprocation within a time limit in his book, *Given Time*, focusing on the time boundary and temporality that conditions the gift exchange.

The gift is not a gift; the gift only gives to the extent it gives time. The difference between a gift and every other operation of pure and simple exchange is that the gift gives time. There where there is gift, there is time. What it gives, the gift is time, but this gift of time is also a demand of time. The thing must not be restituted immediately and right away. There must be time, it must last, there must be waiting—without forgetting. It demands time, the thing, but it demands a delimited time, neither an instant nor an infinite time, but a time determined by a term, in other words, a rhythm, a cadence (Derrida 1992:41).

Derrida also considers the “time limit” as a condition for a gift to become the gift: only if there is a deferral between exchanges and only if there is a waiting for a gift to be restituted, it can be the gift. Here, the certainty of the gift is deferred and undecided until the return is completed. The exchange between two parties remains unfulfilled as well as anxious due to the potential of destructive power that the gift exchange preserves until the waiting is completed and the promise to return the gift is kept. In the gift exchange, waiting is a key activity, as preparation for the next exchange and a major means of maintaining the relationship. Moreover, the rigors and demands of waiting can themselves heighten the creative and destructive powers of exchange.

Drawing on the transformative power of money as described by Marx, and the explication of anxious waiting from Mauss and Derrida, I take a slight different direction to understand the anxiety embedded in remittances, emphasizing the particular temporality that remittances entail—the tendency to be future-oriented—“waiting with anticipation” (Gasparini 1995). In *On Waiting*, Gasparini sums up the attributes of waiting in three aspects: 1) waiting as an interstitial time; 2) waiting as blockage of action; and 3) waiting as an experience field with substitute meanings. In addition, relying on the dictionary definitions of waiting as “the action of remaining stationary or quiescent in expectation of something” or “remaining in a state of repose or inaction, until something expected happens,” he highlights that waiting embraces expectation, a future-oriented action that attempts to control uncertainty (Gasparini 1995).

Waiting is a special “crossroads” between the present and the future, between certainty and uncertainty. And waiting is the “present of the future”(Augustine cited from Gasparini 1995:30). In the liminal temporality, waiting could be a passive activity producing feelings of powerless, helpless, and vulnerability (Cranpanzano 1986). On the other hand, waiting can be rigorous activity, since it might require a constant state of alertness and preparation. Moreover, “skillful waiting” produces a subject that is suitable to the speed and contingency of late capitalism (Chua 2011).

In Yanbian, I have witnessed different kinds of and strategies for waiting, but all of them demand the core trait of patience, which Gasparini characterizes as “an ability to await events” and “the full acceptance of the other’s time” (Gasparini 1995). I have heard many Korean Chinese migrants and their families accept long-term separation as a “necessary life phase for a better life.”⁶ The embrace of waiting in everyday life leads me to understand that waiting has resulted in an interpersonal and inter-subjective temporality that binds two people, such as the separated partners appearing in the later part of this chapter. I view the waiting caused by separation as a form of work practiced alongside a series of substitute meaningful jobs, as Gasparini indicates; for example, waiting for partners while taking care of children or investing the remittances. Thus, waiting is a special temporal domain that creates a particular affect and sense of temporality—“the present of the future.” Waiting is not, I would argue, the act of doing nothing in a void time and space, but rather consists in doing something special in a given time, creating new arrangements and new meanings.

⁶ Barbara Adam cites Weigert in *Time and Social Theory*(1991): “The essential temporality of everyday life means that humans experience not only the passing of time, but also the necessity to wait until one temporal process its course in order for another to begin. All humans wait, and in the fullest sense of the term, only humans wait. Waiting is an experience based on the interpretation and understanding of the temporal structures of events and human desires” (121).

In what follows, my ethnography explores stories of waiting for remittance, a currency that entails a temporality of waiting⁷ between money and gift, a fused embodiment of making and caring for money to support the family's future by deferring the present togetherness of couples. In other words, remittances act as a drive to imagine and hope for the not-yet-better-future. Bloch discusses the Not-Yet-Consciousness as "the preconscious of what is to come, the psychological birth place of the new" (Bloch 1995:116). The not-yet-conscious and the not-yet-become exist in a space of concrete anticipation—that is, a space for something new to come into being. Potential futures live in the present moment without revealing their real appearance. Analyzing the anxiety stemming from the uncertain futures and long waits for partners predominant in a transnational migration circumstance, my interest is not to see the not-yet-consciousness as a stable temporality or psychological state, but rather to see how actively the waiting partners have developed methods of manipulating the not-yet-consciousness in order to overcome uncertainty and despair about the future. Furthermore, I want to examine how the anticipatory emotion of the not-yet-consciousness cuts across the liminality between the present and the future and produces a particular image of the future (Adams & Murphy & Clarke 2009).⁸ Anticipation does not only belong to individual bodies. It

⁷ Anthropologists have long discussed the pattern of exchange through a radical distinction between commodity and gift in terms of the personal engagement with and attachment to things. The concept of commodity presupposes independence and alienability whereas gift presupposes dependence and inalienability; the first is class-based whereas the second is clan-based (Gregory 1982). However, this binary opposition has been challenged in various ways. The thing has its own "social life" (Appadurai 1986), crossing boundaries between commodity and gift exchange over time. Appadurai demonstrates with an example: slave used to be a commodity for exchange but it is not any longer as the society has changed. In addition, the clear distinction was criticized as romanticization of the western view in opposition to the non-western society that is based on the kinship (Parry and Bloch 1989: 8-12). This contrasting view of gift and commodity exchange does not remain determined as seen in the notion of "instrumental gift" (Yan 1996; Yang 1994), "keeping while giving the inalienable possession" (Weiner 1992), and "alienable gifts and inalienable commodities" (Miller 2001).

⁸ In the article, "Anticipation: Technoscience, life, affect, temporality," the authors sum up the anticipatory regime as following: 1) it is formed through seeing the future as palpable in the present; 2) it has epistemic value for knowledge production and ethnicized value for subject; 3) it is formed through modes of prediction and instrumentality; and 4) it has affective dimension binding subjects in affective economies of fear, hope, salvation,

is also provoked and distributed in the form of mass fear and hope, thereby creating an “affective economy” (Ahmed 2004).

Reflecting the dominant and collective feeling structured by pervasive migration in Yanbian, my ethnographic analysis demonstrates the special economy and the role of remittance as an anticipatory means of maintaining (but also breaking up) the intimate relationship between two separated parties. Although remittance can be considered merely a form of money used in impersonal ways to buy things, it can also carry a strong personal attachment in that the remittance is sent to support the family back home in the name of love or family duty. It also needs to be wisely used, cared, and invested not only in order to create more wealth and serve a better future, but also to respect the sender’s time, labor, and sacrifice, as I elaborate in my discussion of the idea of “caring for money” in Mr. Ho’s story in the following section. Two parties—sender and receiver—exchange and share not only economic value but also a particular responsibility for the future of their family, which is sustained through the deferral of present togetherness. It is also a means of proving fidelity in the marital relationship. As the hiking members put it, “As long as money is sent, there is still love.” My question includes the temporality of remittances: how does anxiety for the future—a form of anticipation—come into play in taking care of remittances, intimate relationships, and uncertain futures? Grounded in the ethnographic narrative of migrant families, my analysis suggests that remittances that include a temporality of waiting and anxiety serve as a critical means to link the present to the future in a setting of transnational migration. In what

and precariousness toward futures already made real in the present(Adams&Murphy&Clarke 2009). Here, anticipation is an activity that imagines the future into a more knowable present form and an affective state that generates a certain value of knowledge in order to manage future uncertainty and maintain the optimum of present life.

follows, I elaborate on the specific sources of anxiety in Korean Chinese remittance and its actual work that reshapes intimate relationships.

3.3 Waiting Stories

3.3.1 Let the River Run

The movie *Let the River Run* is a noteworthy account of the contemporary Korean Chinese migration in the sense that it stages Yanbian as a “waiting room” where everybody is waiting for somebody to return. It also captures the necessity of migration to Korea and the rising anxiety of migrants’ families in Yanbian. In the movie, Chul, a middle school boy in Yanbian, shows up one day with a fancy motorbike. The motorbike makes him the object of flattery and envy from his friends, and approaches by many girls. Suddenly Chul is the most popular boy in school. At the same time, the motorbike leads him to become “a bad boy,” spending less time on school work and more money on eating out and drinking, and staying out in night clubs till late. Chul now makes friends easily with his money and motorbike. He is well aware, however, that his indulgences would be impossible without the money sent by his mother working in Korea in order to support his studies and provide for his future.

Chul’s mother, who was once a diligent farmer, has decided to go to Korea after witnessing the sudden material affluence of Korean Chinese returnees. She has seen them move from old-fashioned countryside houses to expensive urban apartments, dress their children in fancy clothes, and send them to larger cities for better educations. She feels left behind. Desperate to go to Korea, she secretly prepares to migrate through an illegal broker. She doesn’t tell her family about her decision until the day before she leaves to be smuggled into Korea. In fact, many Korean Chinese women choose the fake marriage route to Korea—but this isn’t for Chul’s mom. “I am going to Korea,” she says proudly, “not through marriage,

but through smuggling. That way I do nothing shameful to my husband and son.” Her awareness of the possibility of “going to Korea through marriage” (*hanguke shijipgada*) evidences the sexual anxiety widely shared among Korean Chinese. She wants to portray herself as an honorable and brave wife and mother willing to confront the unknown dangers of a trip to Korea on an old, shabby, and unsafe ship of the sort used by illegal brokers to minimize costs. People often die or disappear on the way. Nothing is certain until the ship is safely anchored. None of this stops Chul’s mom, who believes that the dangers of smuggling represent a more honorable and moral route than fake marriage.

In Korea, Chul’s mother becomes an illegal worker constantly beset by police. Even under threat of deportation, however, she works hard day and night in construction and regularly sends letters and money to her family in China. Labor in Korea is much more intense than farming in China, but she is happy with the higher income and the anticipation of a better future. Meanwhile in China, Chul’s father, a quiet farmer, waits for his wife, still living their old life in the countryside. Sometimes, when he misses his wife, he ritualistically washes her clothes and dries them. There is little else he can do except wait for her money, and wait for her return. This long-distance family relationship seems stable and peaceful, if a little melancholy. But one day, as Chul’s mom is running from the police, she falls off a cliff and dies. She never returned home to her husband and son.

The movie captures Yanbian as “waiting room,” where almost everybody is waiting for somebody to return from migrant work. It shows the transformative power of money, the way in which it expands and transforms subjectivity as Marx elaborates above; the boy can promote himself from a common nobody into the coolest and the most popular figure in his

school. “Money from Korea” bought him the motorbike and, by extension, influence and status among his friends.⁹

However, the power of money does not merely serve individual satisfaction, but also transforms social relationships, landscapes, and dynamics. Remittances, mostly from Korea, have clearly contributed to local economic development in Yanbian. A remote ethnic border zone adjacent to North Korea, Yanbian has had to contend with limited economic support from the central government because it has been seen as neither “marketable” nor “profitable” as an investment opportunity. Therefore, “planned under-development” in this ethnic border zone, as Yanbian Korean Chinese informally presumes, has given Korean Chinese strong incentives to move out of Yanbian in order to seize economic opportunities during the rapid economic transformation of China. The influx of cash from Korea has had an enormous impact as I have showed in chapter 2: it now amounts to more than three times the annual income of the local Yanbian government, according to informal statistics.¹⁰ Dependency on remittances—not only by individual households but also by Yanbian economy in general—has been aggravated over time, and the influx of cash has dramatically transformed the culture and economy, greatly increasing consumption. The remittances have enabled Korean Chinese farmers to reinvent themselves as city dwellers. Increases in demand have boosted Yanbian’s construction and housing markets. The erstwhile ethnic backwater now seems to display an exemplary economic development, purely through the force of remittances. In the midst of

⁹ In *Millennial Monsters*, Anne Allison points out the fantasy energy encapsulated in commodities and new technologies, borrowing a term of “enchanted commodities” from Walter Benjamin. She analyzes the power of Japanese play goods and toys that enchants and stimulates the imagination of players while revealing fantasies embedded in relations of capitalism, cultural geopolitics, and techno-communication (2006:29). Not only in the film, but also across the region of Yanbian, things and commodities that Korean Chinese purchased with money sent from Korea have stimulated the imagination of Korean culture and represented the material affluence. In addition, these things have played a critical role in enchanting the would-be-Korean Chinese migrants and provoking the Korean dream.

¹⁰ It was more than \$100,000 [correct figure? Seems like it would probably be much higher...] according to the informal statistics for 2006 (Yanbian daily newspaper).

these changes, many Korean Chinese become as anxious as Chul's mother to catch up with the fast pace of development, to keep from being left behind.

Besides the achievement of material affluence, the movie particularly highlights how money has transformed the intimate domain and the “structure of feeling” of Korean Chinese society in Yanbian, as migration has spread deeply in the fabric of everyday life. Money enables separated couples to divorce or find better partners. A moneymaking wife can dominate the marriage relationship, upending the patriarchal Korean Chinese family structure. As I mentioned above, many cases of “fake” divorce turn into “real” breakups. The increase in affairs and divorce has been viewed as a “moral crisis.” In this turmoil, Chul's mother chooses smuggling to express her strong desire to avoid the moral stigma associated with fake marriage. When confronting the dominant structure of feeling related to migration—the notion that it subordinates love to money—she wants to prove her courage and her capacity to pursue “clean” and “sincere” money by choosing the more dangerous but more “moral” route of smuggling. However, her good intentions come to nothing when she is killed. Her family's long wait cannot be rewarded or reciprocated, leaving Chul and his father only with emotional debt, sadness, and hopelessness. Chul's mother, fighting against the uncertainty of the future, sacrifices her time, labor, and body in the name of love. But her death leaves the debt unredeemable and the desperate waiting unrewarded. A similar narrative debt haunts the following stories—and Yanbian itself.

3.3.2 Caring for Remittances I: As Money

The numberless frustrations, betrayals and breakup stories that have been widely circulated in local magazines, radio shows, and essays, portray a form of moral hazard or even ethnic crisis that has presumably derived from “contamination” by Korean capitalist culture

(see how Communist Party members attempt to view the impact of the Korean dream and Korean wind in chapter 5). Personal breakup stories are less frequently made public because they are seen as shameful for families and individuals in Yanbian—a relatively small region where in many communities everybody might know everybody else. At the same time, it is public knowledge that everybody acknowledges and shares that the divorce rate and extramarital affairs are increasing in the midst of rampant transnational migration. Korean Chinese, I found, have dealt with this contradiction by creating a particular type of storytelling about breakups and betrayals, incidents that are too intimate, too private, or too hurtful to be freely spoken to other people. The stories are circulated in the form of *rumors* that have anonymous subjects, without identifying any names or places. But the contents and patterns of breakup and affair stories are constantly spoken and spread as a shared, empathetic experience. The contradictory traits of this type of storytelling—secrets that are also public knowledge—have often caused me to have a difficult time gathering certain stories, even though I have developed longstanding personal relationships with many Korean Chinese *botoli*.

Another characteristic of this storytelling is that money and love can become intermixed and interchangeable, as in the saying “as long as there is money coming, there is love” that I introduced in the hiking scene. The following story of Mr. Ho is an exemplary one that shows the complex relationship between money and love in an intimate setting of transnational mobility. I started hiking with Mr. Ho and his friends; I became close to him and heard more detailed personal stories about himself and his family. Even though Mr. Ho claimed that he was now more into hiking than drinking, he always seemed to find it easier and more relaxing to talk about himself when he got properly drunk. When we hung out with other *botoli* friends of his, all living alone in Yanbian while their wives were working in Korea, drinking was an essential

backdrop. After a hike one day in the fall of 2009, Mr. Ho started revealing his life story over lunch and drinks, the story that until then he had been unwilling to fully share with me.

Mr. Ho was a dedicated Communist party member in Yanbian whose wife has been working in Korea for the past twenty years. He had finally attained a stable life in his mid-fifties, but before that he encountered many vicissitudes. When his father, a hard-working and dedicated soldier, was randomly accused of being an “elite” who served “the capitalist evil” during the Cultural Revolution, his family completely fell apart and the social stigma of being the “babies of a capitalist” made it impossible for all of his siblings (and his mother) to get jobs. Their poverty became dire. The social isolation was even harder to endure. Mr. Ho’s youth was full of trauma, so he promised himself to gain outstanding social recognition someday in order to overcome the disgrace deeply attached to his status as “the baby of a capitalist.”

As the Cultural Revolution faded away after 1978, Mr. Ho was fortunate enough to land a job as a factory worker in a printing work unit. He was gradually promoted to better positions. He married and had a child in the mid-1980s, and had every reason to believe that he had built a much nicer and happier life than during the Cultural Revolution. But as the housing market was privatized in the early 1990s, his income quickly became insufficient to support his family. Conveniently, China normalized its diplomatic relationship with South Korea in 1992. The door to Korea—previously an “enemy capitalist homeland” under the strict politics of the Cold War—had suddenly opened wide. Many of his friends and relatives hurried to leave for Korea to seek better economic futures. Mr. Ho and his family were no exceptions. Following in the wake of the Korean dream and with an urgent need to adapt in a rapidly changing China, Ho’s wife, a factory worker, quit her job and went to Korea, while Mr. Ho concentrated on earning further promotions and extending his social network in Yanbian. Given that Ho had a

prestigious position in a good work unit, the couple believed her departure for Korea to be a rational choice as a long-term plan.

However, Mr. Ho did not want to let his wife go because of the saying in Yanbian, “Once your wife is gone to Korea, she will be lost in the Korean wind.” At the same time, he *had* to let her go in order to pay off the debt incurred when he had bought a new apartment as soon as housing was made a commodity to purchase rather than being provided by work units.¹¹ After his wife left for Korea in 1993, he underwent an internal struggle as a patriarchal male breadwinner whose wife was now making more money than he was. He filled his wait for his wife with familial duties: taking care of his son, saving the remittances sent by his wife, transforming the money into tangible properties. His wise management of the remittances allowed him to achieve material prosperity. Despite his and his wife’s accomplishments, Mr. Ho remained anxious about her absence. “In order not to ‘lose’ my wife and manage our common future,” he reflected once, “I have had to develop my ‘secret method’ to keep my wife for the last twenty years.” His secret method was that “caring for money is more important than making money.”

Mr. Ho’s fear—“losing” his wife in Korea—derived from the transformative power of money and the deferral of affective exchange. To begin with, Mr. Ho noted the creative power of money in transforming his wife into a controlling figure. Thanks to her income, Mr. Ho’s wife gained power over many aspects of their marriage relationship. For example, when Mr. Ho bought a new apartment with the saved remittances, his wife asked somebody she knew to check the real price and conditions of the house. Apparently, she never fully trusted the way that Mr. Ho spent her money. Although Mr. Ho felt horrible about his wife’s suspicion, he

¹¹ In Yanbian, work units distributed housing for free in the 1980s. But beginning in the 1990s, work units sold houses to their workers at very low price under a government subsidy. Mr. Ho’s work unit sold him a low-priced new apartment.

knew this was the consequence of her labors and the sacrifice of her body and youth. He believed that the money in fact belonged to her. Thus there wasn't much he could say against her. At the same time, Mr. Ho grew incredibly anxious about his wife's growing freedom as a sexually independent subject. Mr. Ho was always afraid that his wife may have affairs with Korean men, whom he imagined as "cooler" and more sophisticated than Korean Chinese, based on his viewing of Korean soap operas.

Money provided his wife with the freedom to choose where she wanted to go. Her increased freedom meant increased anxiety for him. Despite his loneliness and frustration, however, he could not even imagine having an affair with another woman. "If I had an affair, I would lose my wife, my money, and all that I have made. How could I dare think of such a thing?" After observing many cases in which the extravagant spending of remittances sent by a partner in Korea led to a divorce, Mr. Ho was convinced that caring for money was the core force in strengthening his long-term and long-distance relationship.

His anxiety reached a peak when he visited Korea. He was eager to see the capitalist country, but even more eager to see his wife for the first time in three years. Mr. Ho was excited about the trip, and he imagined how emotional, moving, and arousing the encounter would be. He repeatedly practiced the right words to express his love for his wife. However, when he met her in Seoul, Mr. Ho was completely disappointed. All she talked about was money.

My wife was very cold toward me. I had dreamt intensely about having sex with her. But she seemed to have no interest in me. She just "gave" herself to me once, and was in fact very reluctant. We had not seen each other in three years. I wondered what had happened. Is this because of capitalism? She kept saying, however, "No matter what, I will not leave my husband and my son." I cried over these words, thinking how bad and lonely she must have felt to be saying things like that.

Ms. Ho developed her strong attachment to money as a result of her long and harsh labors, more than twelve hours a day for years and years in capitalist and exploitative Korea. Mr. Ho

believed his wife worried neither about her husband nor her son. All she seemed to be concerned about was money—the way in which her “blood money” should be spent, saved, and managed. She had been living for money. She would die for money.

I see her sensitive reaction to money—in the form of remittances—from two different angles. First, Ms. Ho’s attachment to money could have been her way of refusing to be separated from what she had produced. Marx points out that labor produces not only a commodity but also the worker as commodity—“the worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the greater is the worker’s lack of object” (Marx 1988:72). The worker does not belong to the consequence of labor, always being alien and external to the labor product. This is the alienation of labor, an innate characteristic of labor in capitalism. Ho’s wife’s strong attachment to money reflects her desperation to claim the hidden relationship between her work and its outcome. Money is an emblem of her investment of time, health, youth, and loneliness, a biography of her labor over the last twenty years. The money acts as her alter ego and a manifestation of herself, which needs to be well managed and preserved in whatever forms it takes.

Second, money demonstrates its transformative power in reshaping the couple’s relationship and subjectivity. Mr. Ho’s wife transformed herself from a docile wife working in a low-level factory job into a controlling breadwinner who directed the family’s financial fortunes while working in a metropolitan city in Korea. At the same time, Mr. Ho—a self-defined patriarchal Korean Chinese man—dedicated himself to “caring work,” normally considered the province of the wife, while constantly catering to the needs and directives of his wife. In addition, despite the material affluence achieved thanks to the money sent by his

wife, Mr. Ho became a perpetually anxious husband who had to develop a secret method to tame the transformative power of money and the unpredictable desires of his wife in more creative ways—by overseeing the expansion of the family’s wealth and the maintenance of a nice house to which his wife would (hopefully) want to return. Money has its own agency and acts both as an end and as a means, and as such it was under special affective care in Ho’s household.

3.3.3 Caring for Remittances II: As Gift

Despite the sovereign power of money, the remittance also acts as a gift that requires mutual reciprocity from husband and wife, who are under the obligation of being good partners to each other. Given the mutuality of the gift, Mr. Ho also had to pay back his wife by expressing care for the money she sends, as a way of showing his appreciation for her labor. His caring for money as evidence of his love, and a way to reciprocate her efforts, needed to be visible and tangible; otherwise his wife might not notice. Mr. Ho was afraid that the absence of return for her gift could unleash the destructive power of money and ruin the relationship. That is why he made a special effort to prove his deep care for her money by making shrewd purchases of real estate.

Despite his fulfillment of family duties such as taking care of their son and increasing the family wealth, Mr. Ho told me, “I have always felt indebted to my wife. But I know my wife and I are mutually indebted to each other.” The mutual debt between Mr. Ho and his wife must be paid off to each other at a given time. That is because the debt, which generated waiting by manifesting the desire for possibility (Han 2011), as Derrida shows us above, provided the condition for continuing their marriage relationship. Mr. Ho was waiting for his wife’s return home, and his wife was waiting to return to China. They had each endured

different kinds of waiting in different places, and engaged in different forms of caring for money. Waiting bound these two parties together, conditioning their interpersonal subjectivity. Waiting enables the flow of currency and sustains long-term migration.

At the same time, caring for money is not a sufficient gesture to sustain the long-term, separated relationship, due to a tricky characteristic of remittances: the remittance was not exactly a gift given to Mr. Ho because it never fully belonged to him. The dominance of his wife over the money proved more powerful than he imagined.

I thought the money was ours. So one day I lent some of it to my mother because she needed a security deposit to buy a new apartment. I did not tell my wife because I thought it was a trivial matter. Yet when she found out she became incredibly furious. She could not stop crying for several days and did not talk to me for a week. I had simply lent money to my mother! Wow! Since then I have realized how important the money is to her, but also that I cannot or should not touch the money under my control. I thought it was our money that needed my caring and management. But the money belongs to her, hence key decisions as to how it should be spent can be made only by her.

After discovering that her money could not be spent without her permission, Mr. Ho felt powerless because he did not have any right to use the money, even though he was responsible for keeping it and if possible increasing it.

I have never been selfish about the money. I thought it was our money, and I deeply appreciate her hardship. Thinking of her, I have done so much work here in Yanbian waiting for her to return. Is waiting easy work to do? I have had to play multiple roles to fill her absence as a mother, father, and teacher. Waiting has killed me for the last twenty years. Loneliness has been the source of all my diseases. I said to myself, I deserve better than this!

Even though he managed their money and properties over the years, Mr. Ho's obligation seemed to remain unfulfilled. He felt cheated by his long wait because his wife was never satisfied with his efforts and their consequences. Waiting is a feeling of being stuck. Waiting is hard work that requires "an ability to await events," and "the full acceptance of the other's time" (Gasparini 1995). But waiting is a kind of labor that nobody appreciates, as Mr. Ho said.

Waiting is a difficult activity that requires endurance and sacrifice—as he said, “loneliness is the source” of his illness. Mr. Ho believed that he had paid back the hardship of his wife’s labor. But his wife apparently did not agree. In her view, the transaction was never fully completed, thus leaving both of them with the debt seemingly unpaid. And if he stopped waiting, the relationship would immediately fall to pieces.

Mr. Ho kept emphasizing to me that his waiting should be recognized in economic terms as well, because remittances could not stand alone without his reciprocal efforts if they were to expand as property and wealth. His assertion was that remittances would be preserved only through careful collaboration in making and caring for the money. Although his wife was the one who has earned the money, she was not the one who actually spent or invested it. She could only hear about the process of using the money and see its consequences in the form of houses and things. At the same time, even though Mr. Ho was not the one who earned the money, he was the one who directly spent it. Yet his expenses were subject to the supervision of his wife, who claimed that the money belonged to her.

The agents who make and spend money are separated in a migration setting. The actual enjoyment of remittances is always deferred in “the present of the future.” The imagination of belonging to a common future is contingent on a mutual promise, one that is breakable and fragile. To this uncertainty, Mr. Ho’s secret method was a reasonable response; money was the only tangible evidence that could show his love that could appease the high anxiety of waiting. Mr. Ho believed that “where money is saved, my wife returns.” In the next section, I introduce Ms. Li’s story of broken promises and vulnerable waiting as a contrast to Mr. Ho.

3.3.4 Broken Promises

Promises are the unique human way of ordering the future, making it predictable and reliable to the extent that this is humanly possible.

Cries of the Republic, Hannah Arendt¹²

Of regular hiking members, Kim Jielan became my closest friend and informant during my field research in Yanbian (who appeared in chapter 1 and 2). Jielan is a graduate of the Yanbian medical school. She is in her late twenties and works for the local government handling medical policy. Growing up the daughter of rice farmers in a town on the North Korean border, Jielan wanted to escape the farming life. Yet even after she made it through medical school and landed a stable government job, her financial status has been always tight because her family has never given her money, and it's relatively expensive to live in Yanji, the capital of Yanbian. Her parents were never poor as farmers in her hometown, but they have never been well off enough to maintain a city life, either. In order to get ahead and support Jielan, their only daughter, her father tried for years to get work in Korea. But he did not succeed in getting a work visa until 2008, when he was finally able to join Jielan's uncles, aunts, and cousins, who all worked in Korea.

On Qingming day, a traditional day to take care of ancestors' graves, Jielan invited me to go to her hometown. "Since everybody is gone to Korea, there are not so many family members left in my hometown. To my family, it is a big financial relief that my father went to Korea. But my mom is very lonely. Why don't you come with me?" In this trip, I met a number of "waiting people" (*botoli*), those whose partners have been working in Korea for years, including Jielan's mother, an uncle (Jielan's father's brother), and an aunt (Jielan's mother's brother's wife). Over lunch, all these *botolis* told their own story, which showed

¹² I quote this from Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*.

how a waiting partner could be compensated as well as betrayed, and how the betrayal put the waiting in a vulnerable life situation.

Jielan's uncle whose wife has been working in Korea for years initiated the conversation regarding the *Korean wind*. Her uncle was running a store that dealt with ice trucks. He seemed to be doing well with his business, saying, "It is enough to feed our family." The uncle used to work as a banker in a small town but moved to the city of Tumen (one of Yanbian's cities on the border with North Korea) after his wife made money in Korea enough to purchase an apartment in the city. He told us that his wife has been working for one of the most renowned entrepreneur families in Korea as a domestic worker, living in their house. His point was that his wife's work was simple and her pay was good compared to other Korean Chinese working under harsh conditions in Korea, while bragging about their economic achievements thanks to the *Korean wind*. He was also proud of how well he has taken care of the housework, cooking for his son and himself and keeping his place in order as a good househusband. The modern apartment, well-maintained business, and constant remittances sent from his wife were all envied by other waiting people—*botoli*—such as Jielan's mother and her aunt. He invited me to his apartment, which had been newly decorated a year ago, suggesting he would show how good cook he had become. We laughed together because "househusbands" are unusual among Korean Chinese men, who are reputed in Yanbian to be very patriarchal and reluctant to do any housework, especially in contrast to Han Chinese men. But conditions shaped by the *Korean wind* force the waiting men to be good househusbands, even as some fear being considered something of a travesty in patriarchal terms, as seen in the anxiety of Mr. Ho.

In this lively conversation that the uncle mainly dominated, I saw Ms. Li, Jielan's aunt (she was the wife of Jielan's mother's brother), looking depressed. Now in her late forties, she had been a farmer before her marriage. Now she worked in a Japanese bag factory in Yanbian, a job she disliked because of long working hours and low wages. But there was no way for her to escape the factory—unless she left for Korea, there would not be much change in her life. Ms. Li's husband had gone to Korea seven years earlier, promising that he would return in three years and that they would have a happy life together afterwards. He was heavily indebted to the illegal broker on whom he relied to get to Korea. They had believed the debt would be a worthwhile investment in a better future. He became an undocumented person soon after he arrived. His illegal status did not allow him to move back and forth between China and Korea. He was determined to stay in Korea until he made a satisfactory amount of money. Things looked tough. But Ms. Li was willing to go through this struggle as long as her husband returned to China with the money that he promised her.

For the first two years, her husband sent money to Li every other month, and she took good care of it. The remittances definitely helped, and she felt as if they were making progress. She anticipated making the move to a modern apartment. Starting in her husband's third year, however, the remittances began arriving later and less often, and the amounts became smaller and smaller. Eventually, they stopped altogether. Her husband did not call or send word to Ms. Li. She could not reach him. He had literally disappeared from her life. There were rumors about Li's husband, that he had met a new woman, or had gone broke. She had been waiting seven years for his return, and he had betrayed her, making her feel as if she had wasted her life for nothing. Unlike her relatives and friends whose Korean dreams came true, Ms. Li still had neither a house nor money, the usual visible evidence of the

Korean dream and reward for waiting for her husband. She wanted badly to get out of Yanbian and to go to Korea, even through a fake marriage if necessary. She told us that she would use whatever means she could to get into Korea. And yet she is still married to the disappeared husband and cannot divorce him, so even a fake marriage to a Korean man is not an option for her. “I’m getting old and sick waiting for my husband,” she said. “I’m really stuck. There’s no way out for me.”¹³

If we consider promises as an ordering of the future to make the future predictable and reliable (Arendt 1972; Ahmed 2010), the broken promise disordered Ms. Li’s future. Her husband’s disappearance all but destroyed her life, and left few ways out for her.

There is no way for me to find my husband even if I go to Korea. And I could not afford to pay the expensive fee for an illegal broker anyway. I applied for a visa, but it was rejected. I’ve been dying to go to Korea—not only for money, but also to find my husband. At first I worried about him so much when he didn’t call me. But when I understood that he had intentionally cut off contact, I wanted to kill him! Now I’m just so exhausted from hating and waiting for him. It was over a long time ago, wasn’t it? I’m just one of many unlucky Korean Chinese swept up by the Korean dream. What’s the use of revenge? Still, I need to divorce him officially so that I can start my life over again. But nobody knows where he is, or nobody will let me know. I am really stuck.

Ms. Li’s long-term and long-distance relationship with her husband started with a mutual promise, one that was given a time limit: “I will return in three years.” However, once her husband stopped sending money and calling her, their bond to each other and to a common future dissolved. Since then, her wait has transformed into a chronic, hopeless vigil. The

¹³ The kinds of visa that allow Korean Chinese to get into Korea are very limited. Visas can be obtained through family invitation, marriage, and business. But high demand for visas among Korean Chinese has produced a thriving market in fake visas and documents. Also, family and marriage relationships are frequently counterfeited in order to obtain visas. Visas acquired through illegal brokers are very common among Korean Chinese despite the high cost. Korean Chinese still consider the trip to Korea worth it even after the rise of China as a prime global economic power and the financial crisis of 2008.

longer it goes on, the more vulnerable she becomes. In fact, Ms. Li could have made ends meet in China without relying on the remittances sent by her husband. Although the wages were not as high as what they would have been in Korea, she could feed herself and her daughter under a tight budget. What made her more miserable, however, were her ceaseless attempts to go to Korea and her continuous hope of making more money there: “If I went to Korea, I could get paid ten times more than now.” But, as her visa requests were being repeatedly rejected, her life seemed to float, not in her present, but in an imagined future somewhere else—perhaps Korea. The anticipation seemed poisonous, making her feel desperate to escape from the present. Furthermore, the discrepancy between her present and her expected, hoped-for future made her suspended life that much more painful when she compared herself with someone who had realized the Korean dream.

Once she ceased to hope for a rosy future with her husband, her mental and physical health deteriorated remarkably. She was sick but needed to work. She was weak but wanted to go to Korea. Until she succeeded, her desperation and angst would not go away. At the same time, she believed there wasn’t much for her to do except wait for the day she could go to Korea. Now, Ms. Li told us, “I’m no longer anxious because I’ve lost hope. I’m just too exhausted from hating him and waiting for him.” At that point, she still wanted badly to go to Korea—not to get revenge on her husband, but to be rewarded for her lost time.

Beset by this internal struggle, Ms. Li was miserable in an economic respect. She was becoming a mere spectator—she saw herself lagging behind more and more in the rapidly changing Yanbian. Ms. Li came to know that she did not fit into the prosperous Yanbian that enjoyed the fruits of the Korean dream. She could not brag to her friends and relatives who seized their chance. Her long wait was hard but turned out to be useless, breaking her heart as

well as plunging her life into a kind of suspended animation. Her waiting—promised in love—did not produce any value, thus leaving her empty handed. She was still waiting, not for her husband, but for her departure to Korea.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has read the waiting stories of Korean Chinese migrants' partners, exploring the anxieties, anticipations, economies, and temporalities generated by the influx of remittances from Korea to Yanbian, China. Exploring Yanbian as if it were a waiting room—*stuck but on the move*—as in “dwelling-in-travel” (Clifford 1997:2), a place where waiting is considered an essential condition of life, I have argued that “waiting (in particular, while caring for money as a way of returning love) with anticipation” is in fact a form of labor that facilitates and perpetuates the circuit of transnational migration. And I have also argued that remittance is a currency that entails affect and futurity. I situate remittances as a special kind of money, functioning not only as money, but also as gift. In addition, highlighting the future-oriented temporality of remittances, my analysis suggests that remittances entail periods of waiting and anxiety as a critical means to link the present to the not-yet-future in a setting of transnational migration. Although numerous Korean Chinese have wanted, pursued, and achieved the fruits of this ethnicity-based transnational labor migration, a moral and sexual anxiety has still dominated the collective feeling of Korean Chinese, taking the form of loss, loneliness, and uncertainty, as expressed in the song “Everybody Is Gone,” quoted at the beginning of this essay. It is undeniable that the remittances have brought economic prosperity to the Korean Chinese community. But at the same time, they have been considered a source of moral crisis, disrupting traditional family values and stable marital

relationships as a side effect of “capitalist contamination.” The migration has persisted under these contradictions for the last twenty years.

When I went back to Yanbian in 2011 for follow-up research, I learned more about what lies behind this official, public concern about moral standards. I realized that the actual lives of migrants and their families frequently turned on questions of moral legitimacy, sexual fidelity, and economic interests. On this trip, I saw Mr. Ho and received an update from him. I heard about a new life phase for Ms. Li. Both stories were very shocking. After another hike with Mr. Ho, just like the old days, we had dinner. In a confessional tone, he admitted that he hadn’t been faithful to his wife after all. “How can you believe that a man wouldn’t have sex for ten years?” he demanded. “How many people do you think can wait for their wife to return without having affairs? Yanbian is so small that people would know instantly if I weren’t cautious. I have had very secretive sex partners in order to *live*. My wife should not know about this. But living a healthy life by having sex with whomever is a win-win game for both of us. My wife should actually appreciate that I live a healthy life for my age, while waiting for her for so long. I know for sure that my wife is not one to have an affair. But I just had to do it. I’m a man. It’s for my health.” After this outburst, Mr. Ho winked at me, perhaps expressing embarrassment about the double standard he had just invoked.

Jielan told me that her aunt, Ms. Li, finally made it to Korea after multiple trials and errors. Ironically enough, she got back together with her errant husband. Despite the long, deep hatred she had nursed towards him, the couple is apparently enjoying a happy life together in Korea now. Jielan smiled. I was confused by the complex and contentious connivances in these stories. Perhaps Mr. Ho’s wink and Jielan’s smile signified attempts to paper over the moral and sexual anxieties that dominate Yanbian, where everybody is gone.

These pretenses might serve a vital role in the continued generation of the economy of waiting and remittances. As Mr. Ho said, “My wife went back to Korea again, and she still sends the money.”

Chapter 4. *Split Life*: Bodies and Time Between the Two Worlds

One day in late December 2009 in Yanji—the capital city of Yanbian, the Korean Chinese autonomous Prefecture—I was getting ready to vacate my room while wrapping up my field research. The streets were completely buried by heavy snow, so all public transportation had stopped in Yanbian. On this snowy day, Ms. Park, a Korean Chinese migrant woman in her late fifties, was helping me move out. Ms. Park and I had become close by meeting many times in both Korea and China. While cleaning up and chatting together, she inspired me with her insights. “When I went to Korea for the first time, I said to myself that I would come back to China in five years. But, now, how many ‘five years’ have passed?” We were laughing. “Now, I am getting used to moving back and forth between Korea and China. So are my husband and my sons. I have almost become half Korean. I do not know how many five years will need to pass again. Perhaps I’ll keep doing it until I am too old or too sick to work in Korea anymore.” I take this moving “back and forth” between Yanbian and Korea and living in the two worlds as a point of entry to this chapter in order to understand the *split life* that is conditioned by a particular temporality of the visa regulation of the Korean government

In the Introduction, I discussed the enactment and revision of the Overseas Korean Act that excluded Korean Chinese from the category of “overseas Korean” due to their socialist associations and weak economic potential compared to other overseas Koreans, such as those in the U.S., Japan, and Canada—all of whom could freely enter and stay in Korea. Since the Act led Korean Chinese to remain undocumented—they constitute a majority of undocumented overseas Koreans working in Korea—the Korean government began to see Korean Chinese illegality as a critical “population problem.” To resolve the

undocumented Korean Chinese problem, the Korean government initiated a kind of visa that was specially designed for Korean Chinese, the H-2 visa, as a gesture of amnesty. The H-2 visa was intended to increase opportunities for Korean Chinese to freely enter Korea and to cut down on business for illegal brokers (The Korean Law Department 2007). To qualify for this amnesty, Korean Chinese are subject to the following conditions: the undocumented Korean Chinese *must* leave Korea for China for one year in order to return to Korea; after this year passes, they are allowed to work in Korea for another three years, after which they must leave Korea for a while, until the five-year H-2 visa is expired, using up the rest two years. If they abide by this peculiar rhythm imposed by the H-2 visa regulation, their previous record as an illegal worker is “cleaned,” and they can register as documented workers and obtain a “foreign identification card.” Although the renewability is still subject to random policy shifts, Korean Chinese workers welcomed the announcement of the H-2 visa as a big relief that enabled the free movement of Korean Chinese (Kim 2008; Kim&Lee&Lee 2008).¹ Most of all, the migration has increasingly taken the form of “seasonal labor,” as the workers adjust themselves to work schedules split between China and Korea (Kim 2009).²

¹ Jinyoung Lee, Hyekyung Lee, and Hyunmee Kim conducted a collaborative research project on “*The Effects and Satisfaction of the Visit and Employment System*,” funded by the Korean Immigration Service (2008). They studied Korean Chinese attitudes toward this new visiting system that is designed to increase opportunities for entry to Korea and to eradicate the illegal brokers who have profited greatly from illegal migration. According to their results, an overwhelming majority (82.7 percent) of Korean Chinese migrants were satisfied with the lower costs and lessened bureaucracy brought about by the new visa regulations. But 59.6 percent of these interviewees also answered that the new system has not helped much to increase the working opportunities of Korean Chinese in Korea (2008:67-84)

² I have been in contact with several seasonal laborers during my research. A close Korean Chinese female friend of mine, in her early forties, works as an elementary school teacher in China, and goes to Korea every summer and winter break with an H-2 visa to work as a waitress. She says her Korean job during the breaks from school allows her to double her annual income.

This chapter is attentive to the flip side of the H-2 visa (free movement) and the peculiar rhythm, “1-3-2,” as a central characteristic of the constant circulation of Korean Chinese labor between China and Korea. I argue that the H-2 visa crystalizes the Korean government’s official recognition of Korean Chinese as a particular ethnic migrant working class by permitting them to work only in designated fields that are mostly concentrated in the service industries and physical labor.³ One purpose for this visa and labor regulation—formalizing the position of “guest worker”—might have been to protect the Korean labor market from an overflow of cheaper Korean Chinese labor while avoiding long-term Korean Chinese residence in Korea.⁴ At the same time, the Korean government presented it as a way to fairly distribute chances for Korean Chinese to work in Korea, and to give the Korean Chinese, as a group of overseas Koreans, an advantage over other migrants. On the basis of stories of two Korean Chinese transnational migrant women who took advantage of the amnesty and increasingly relaxed policies that have ushered in a new phase of Korean Chinese migration,⁵ my argument in this chapter is twofold. First, I argue that the rhythm,

³ Under the H-2 visa regulation, Korean Chinese are allowed to legally work in 38 fields, including hotel and restaurant related service, construction field, car repairing, nursing for the sick and old, and domestic work (The Korean Immigration Service).

⁴ Hyunmee Kim argues that H-2 is meant to protect residential rights and employment, yet provides only limited protection and rights with respect to unemployment, social welfare, and family reunions. The receiving country—Korea—decides the number, condition, and rights of migrants, and policy itself is ultimately dependent on the “the condition of the Korean economy” (Kim 2009).

⁵ Given the large number of Korean Chinese who were still not allowed to make the trip to Korea, the Korean government initiated a Korean language ability test as a qualification examination. Anybody who scores over 60 points out of 100 earns a chance to enter a lottery. Since Korean Chinese speak Korean as their native language, it is generally not difficult for them to get 60 points. But lottery space is limited according to age group (20 percent for people in their twenties, 25 percent for people in their thirties, 25 percent for those in their forties, 30 percent for those in their fifties, and no limit for those 60 and above). Systematically controlling the entrance procedures through the language exam was intended to reduce illegal immigration, which has been facilitated by an illicit market in fake visas and fabricated documents. The exam was supposed to benefit both the Korean labor market and the Korean Chinese who desire to work in Korea. But given the high demand for Korean visas among Korean Chinese, the success rate was still quite low and the waiting period very long, so illegal activity continued.

“1-3-2”—the particular temporal governmentality created by the visa regulation—sets a limit to the bodies, money, and futurity of Korean Chinese migrants, who have emerged as a transnational ethnic working class. Second, I argue that the 1-3-2 rhythm has reorganized the concept of “work place” and “home,” working time and non-working time, working bodies and resting bodies between Korea and Yanbian, thereby creating a split in terms of the body, time, and space—I term it “*split life*.” Throughout the chapter, my ethnography traces in detail the “habitus”(Bourdieu 1980)⁶ and methods developed by Korean Chinese migrants to care for their bodies, money, and time according to the rhythm of their transnational circulation.

4.1 Domination of Transnational Work

Korean and Korean Chinese scholars have intensively studied Korean Chinese transnational migration as a popular fashion, called the *Korean wind*, that rapidly reshaped the work ethic and futurity of Korean Chinese as transnational migrant workers (Kim 2008; Lee 2005; Lee 2008; Lim 2004; Noh 2001; Park 2006; Seol1998). These studies examine conflicts with and adaptations to transnational migration on the part of transnational working subjects. A central question concerns the in-between identity and location of Korean Chinese in terms of their ethnicity and nationality, and involves critically exploring experiences of discrimination

⁶ Bourdieu elaborates on the concept of *habitus* as a “product of history,” “system of disposition,” and “internalized second nature” that produces individual and collective practices. It is produced by the work of inculcation and appropriation for the objective structures to be reproduced in the form of the durable dispositions. In particular, he points out the influence of institution in creating the individual and collective practices; “The *habitus* is what enables the institution to attain full realization: it is through the capacity for incorporation, which exploits the body’s readiness to take seriously the performative magic of the social, that the king, the banker, or the priest are hereditary monarchy, financial capitalism or the Church made flesh”(1980:57). The *habitus*—that is an internalized system structured through continuity and repetition and thus embedded in bodies and the practices—is apt to use in analyzing the formation of Korean Chinese transnational working subjectivity in that Korean Chinese have incorporated a certain temporality and spatiality—rhythm and logic of movement—into their bodies and moving practices along with the visa regulation and remittance flow.

suffered by Korean Chinese in South Korea, which they presumably understand to be their ancestors' homeland.

Paying different attention from these studies, my analysis is more focused on the rhythm of “back and forth,” the flow of population between Yanbian and Korea. In Yanbian, where transnational labor has come to dominate every corner of everyday life, I found an assumption amongst Korean Chinese that Korea is a working place, while Yanbian is a non-working place. Moreover, I understand the saying with which I started this dissertation—“*Everybody is gone with the Korean wind*”—to hint that “everybody” is “gone” to work and make money, and that to be “not-gone” or “waiting” is to be not-working, while spending the money that has been earned overseas (see chapter 2 and 3). The stories in this chapter will tell us about the ways in which the rhythm of back and forth has reorganized perceptions and practices of the body, money, and time, by generating a stark contrast between working time in Korea and non-working time in Yanbian. This split practice of space overlaps with and differs from Marx's insight on the relationship between home and work: “*He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home*” (Marx 1988). That is, Korean Chinese migrant workers (returnees) do feel at home in Yanbian because they are not working in Yanbian. At the same time, they do *not* feel at home in Yanbian, continuously testifying how much the non-working time in Yanbian, when they lack a steady income, makes them anxious and uncomfortable. In what ways have Korean Chinese, caught up in the *Korean wind*, shaped and reshaped the idea of work and home? What constitutes the shared inevitability of going to Korea, and perpetuates the idea of transnational work as “real” work, whereas time in Yanbian is constructed as unproductive, wasted time? Finally, in what way is transnational work similar to and different from work practiced without moving across national borders?

In this chapter, my interest focuses on the role of the *rhythm* and temporality that works as a particular governmental force to form subjectivities in accordance with the constant, frequent, and repetitive circulation of labor. Lefebvre suggests that the rhythm of everyday life is produced by the combination of cyclical time with linear time. He also emphasizes that for there to be rhythm, there must be repetition in movement, and the rhythm results in a new becoming with difference (Lefebvre 2004: 78-79). Building on the concept of Lefebvre's rhythm, I additionally take into account the governmental aspect of the rhythm that constitutes a new order of life and new kind of subjectivity for Korean Chinese migrants in a transnational work setting. In the following, I will show that the rhythm of circulation—as a new symptom of “post-amnesty”—has generated a new perception and practice of the bodies, time, and space along with a new kind of free movement, creating *split life* between Yanbian and Korea. I will also highlight this particular temporality, “1-3-2,” has led to the emergence of multiple forms of caring methods that Korean Chinese have developed as transnationally mobile subjects.⁷

⁷ The government of the self has been contextualized in the post-socialist setting of modern China. These studies show that the governing process is concrete but gradual, aiming to inscribe new attitudes of market logic onto bodies long habituated to what is represented as a rigid, state-centered socialism, eventually creating a new person altered by contact with ongoing dramatic changes in world capitalism (Dunn 2004; Hoffman 2010). Ethnographies on China, in particular, investigate a sort of neoliberal governmentality closely tied to the complex of Communist party-state-market, or “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics” (Wang 2006; Rofel 2007). The complex of state-market-party produces a self-governed subject, not only by the application of external power, but also by self-management. *Suzhi*, a Chinese term that roughly indicates “human quality” (Anagnost 2004; Yan 2009), especially emerges as a key discussion point in looking at the new working bodies fashioned to serve China as a world factory. Market requirements “individuate the body” to fit into the arrangement of machinery for efficient production in the factory (Ngai 2005); bodies must internalize work habits and a new sense of time, institutionalizing everyday life. The controlling logic modifies unruly peasants, remakes deficient and lazy bodies into cheap and docile ones, and generally requires the improvement of workers’ *Suzhi* (Yan 2009). These studies tend to focus on the creation of new subjectivities through a neoliberal governmentality that is a “contact point” between the government of the state-market and the government of the self. Most studies are focused on the internal labor market, showing how Chinese have responded to rapid economic restructuring and the requirements of the new subjectivity.

Pushing further to situate the self as a gendered, classed, and ethnicized subject specifically in a transnational setting—as a transnational ethnic working class, I examine the ways in which migrants are subject to the rhythm of circulation. I argue that transnational migration as a way of caring for the self and the future does not necessarily lead to economic rewards. Rather, caring for the self can facilitate a wide range of exploitation and even lead to the deterioration of bodies as the migrant workers try to make themselves more marketable. Work is not a simple economic practice, but rather the primary means for life (Weeks 2011), as work allows individuals to be integrated into social, political, and familiar modes of cooperation. Work emerges as an essential site and major principle of constituting the subjectivity that profoundly dominates our life. In the following, I ethnographically explore the emergence of transnational work as a core element of Korean Chinese life, and the development of methods of caring for the body, money, and time, as a response to the rhythm of circulation—the back and forth of the Korean Chinese migratory labor market. On the basis of the narrative of frequent repetition of movement back and forth, I highlight the split life that Korean Chinese have undergone, the split that plays a critical role in formulating transnational subjectivity.

4.2 “1”: One Year of Home

4.2.1 Unfamiliar Home

During 2006 and 2007, Yanbian became re-vitalized by Korean Chinese who returned from Korea due to the Korean government’s granting of amnesty. When I visited Yanbian in the summer of these years, I found various reunions between long-separated families and friends in restaurants and hotels, celebrating homecomings after long-undocumented lives in Korea. Many of the migrants I had come to know through the church in Seoul—as I described in the Introduction—told me about their reunions with relatives they had not

seen for years. With tears in their eyes, the migrants recounted emotional moments at the airport. After (in some cases) more than a decade of separation, some did not recognize the dramatically aged faces of mothers and fathers, wives and husbands, daughters and sons.

When the amnesty transformed Korean Chinese migrants from immobile undocumented workers to freely moving subjects, Korean Chinese returnees underwent feelings of unfamiliarity stemming from their long absence from Yanbian—their home. The changes were alarming: dramatic urbanization, intense consumption, a skyrocketing cost of living, and more critically, the obvious increase of the Han Chinese population. To Ms. Park, a Korean Chinese migrant worker in her late fifties whom I knew from the church, returning home did not feel the way she had thought it would. “Home is not like home,” she said to me repeatedly. “Yanbian is not like before, in many ways. I can’t get by in Yanbian now without speaking Chinese. Han Chinese are everywhere—bankers, sellers, workers (*dagong*), waiters and waitress (*fuwuyuan*). I don’t like that.” Most Korean Chinese I met in Korea told me that their first impression when they arrived in Korea was that “it’s like home.” Everything was written in Korean, their mother tongue even though they have been residents in China for generations (see chapter 1 and 3). Now these migrants felt Yanbian to have become an unfamiliar home. I recount the returnees’ stories about the feeling of unfamiliarity at home—as Park put it, “home is not like home”—while also detailing their efforts to prepare to depart again for Korea in a year.

In a migration setting, home is a complex emotional and material locus in relation to the question of belonging and dwelling. One sees home as a place where one comes from and has an emotional attachment to and yearning to return to (Safran 1991). Beyond the limit of geographical boundaries, home might be reimagined through deterritorialized

political engagement via new media (Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1994). To those who have been on the move for generations, home could be construed as either “where you are at” (Gilroy 1991) or “where you are going to” (Chu 2010). Home may appear as a creolized, hybridized, and impure site to migrants because their mobility has led them to reassess the seemingly absolute and essential link between territory and identity (Hall 1990) through a process of displacement and temporalization in correspondence with specific histories and geopolitical dynamics (Axel 2004). On the other hand, those willing to leave their home in search of a better life may view “home” as an impoverished place lagging behind the present, held back by traditional culture (Chu 2010; Ngai 2003; Yan 2009; Zhang 2006).

These discussions assume that mobility is a condition of modernity that speaks more about movement than settlement, urbanity than rurality, working than comforting, and moving forward than staying stuck in place. Here, home is imagined as a tedious and static space full of familiarity and repetition rather than new and potentially progressive. Thus, home is the place to depart from, not to return to—in fact, an impulse to return home might amount to a “regressive desire” (Felski 2000). To Korean Chinese, however, the locus of home is neither left behind nor static given their constant circulation back and forth between Korea and China according to the rhythm of “1-3-2.” Moreover, since China has risen as a global economic power, in the process boosting a new “Chinese dream” among Korean Chinese, home (Yanbian) cannot be seen simply as a regressive or backward place, either. Many Korean Chinese already have prospered in China’s economic boom, especially after the Korean dream was fundamentally shaken by the global financial crisis of 2008 (see chapter 6). In the remainder of this section, I explore how the migrants readjust from their rhythm of work in Korea to the rhythm of home in Yanbian, as well as vice versa, thus

adding complexity to the idea of “home.” In addition, I point out how their attempts to adjust have reshaped migrant subjectivity according to practices of space and time sharply split between working and non-working.

4.2.2 Yanbian Time

When I made my first visit to Yanbian in 2006, the open hospitality and relaxed time management there amazed me, in total contrast to my experience of meeting with Korean Chinese in Korea. Practically speaking, I had much less difficulty arranging interviews and meetings in Yanbian. And yet, at the beginning, I did face some confusion and embarrassment in scheduling. In Yanbian, there is a unique perception of time and a particular way of planning ahead in making an appointment. Since eating and drinking together is believed to be a natural way to build a relationship in Yanbian, meal times were often chosen for meetings, usually lunch or dinner. To arrange the meal, I called my contacts and asked them if they could meet for conversation and interviews. They usually asked me to call them back in a few days. But it was not always specified when I was supposed to call back. It was left ambiguous. If I called them in “a few” days in my sense, they might say, “Let’s meet at 11:30 for lunch today.” The abrupt suggestion was embarrassing to me because sometimes I already had plans for another meeting at the same time. As I got used to the pattern of time arrangement in Yanbian, I tried not to arrange meeting schedules very tightly, but instead allowed myself to be more available to follow the flow and pattern of making an appointment. The way that I squeezed a large number of interviews into my tight schedule in Korea did not work in Yanbian. Schedules were much less rigid, and people did not always clearly block out particular time periods for specific purposes. Sometimes, the plan was made by spontaneously suggesting, “*How about now?*” This tendency might stem

from the expectation that other people also have a loose and flexible schedule. Of course, the improvisational nature of appointments at times led to time conflicts with other plans. Given this way of arranging time, however, time conflicts seemed to be more acceptable and understandable, and could be used as an acceptable excuse not to go to a meeting. In such cases it was of course necessary to divide up the amount of participating time, prioritizing “more important” meetings over “less important” ones.

The flexible time schedule became more obvious when I met someone for a meal. Usually, mealtime was combined with drinking time. It was very common to drink multiple bottles of beer or strong Chinese alcohol (*baijiu*) over lunch. The meeting usually lasted from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., which was, in fact, a normal lunch break for most people. Sometimes lunch was prolonged to play card games and do “no-work.” Long lunch hours accompanied by drinking (sometimes heavy drinking and even getting drunk) were often condemned as a lack of the Chinese work ethic. A journalist who was very mindful of my status as an outsider jokingly warned me that I should not write about the long lunches in Yanbian.

The loose and relaxing use of time results in a feeling of freedom. This “too-much-free-time,” as Yanbian people tend to call it, sometimes spurs pride in socialism, as it is said to show that there is no need to be under work pressure like in capitalist Korea. At the same time, “too-much-free-time” can also be regarded with shame—as a lazy and unproductive violation of the socialist work pattern. The ambivalent feeling about too-much-free-time is reinforced after traveling to Korea and directly observing densely packed and fast-paced Korean time. “Witnesses” of life in Korea—those who had recently visited or worked in Korea—discussed the advantages of Chinese time while remaining ambivalent about the merits of Korean time. They had two main points: 1) the intensity of Korean time has

enabled Korea to advance and develop in a relatively short period, thus we have to learn from the strong work ethic of Koreans—however, 2) the stresses of Korean time have made human beings inhumanly subject to “work-work” life, unlike in China, where there is an abundance of food, time, and hospitality.⁸ In the end, the too-much-free-time of China leads them easily to come to the conclusion that China is the more comfortable country to live in. In particular, the Communist party members I have met in Yanbian tend to use current Chinese economic successes as clear evidence of the superiority of the Chinese way—led by Chinese socialism and the Communist party. These people also assume that going to Korea for work is the result of failure in China. Those Korean Chinese who have been able to benefit from the Chinese economic boom (see chapter 6) and have become much better off than the returnees/migrants have transformed a previously vague sentiment into a strong belief: the Korean dream has waned whereas the Chinese dream rises, even though Korea is still seen as a path to modernity for many people in Yanbian.

4.2.3 Spending Anxieties

Given the unstable status of the Korean dream in Yanbian, the mark of insecurity attached to the returnees can cause tensions when they get together with friends who have achieved decent economic success without going to Korea. It is partly because the returnees believe that life is not all about sufficient food or free time. It is also because the returnees have had a hard time adjusting to the Yanbian rhythm, which to them involves spending excessive time consuming rather than earning. It is especially difficult when they have to

⁸ In *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?*, Katherine Verdery suggests the role of “time” in transition from socialisms to Postsocialism; “the collapse of socialism came in part from the massive rupture produced by its collision with capitalism’s speedup. If so, it would be especially useful to know something more about the life-experience of those people who worked at the interface of these two temporal systems and could not help realizing how different was capitalism’s time from their own” (1996: 36). Here, the state plays a critical role in creating a new temporal punctuations and rituals that leads to the new socialist man (54).

switch modes between, as they say, “too little time” and “too much time,” between Korea and China. I met Ms. Park in Yanbian again in 2009, and she was not exceptional in confessing the difficulty of switching rhythms when she returned to Yanbian. Park went to Korea ten years ago, leaving behind her husband and two sons. While she worked in Korea, her husband took care of their sons and maintained his job in Yanbian. Like many other Korean Chinese, she was undocumented for seven years. She was arrested, detained for a month, and almost deported. Fortunately, the minister of the church I discussed in chapter 1 sponsored her, and she was released from jail. When they heard about her arrest, her family wanted her to return to Yanbian right away, whether she had made money or not. But she insisted on staying in Korea as long as possible, until she made a substantial amount of money. In the midst of all this, the 2005 amnesty rescued her from her long-term undocumented status and allowed her to go back to China for a new visa to return to Korea. Of course, Park really wanted to return to China because she had not seen her family for seven years—she had been unable to attend the wedding ceremonies of her two sons because she was stuck in Korea as an undocumented worker.

In 2009, Park returned to China to spend one year in order to properly use the five-year work visa in Korea according to the “1-3-2” policy. We became closer during this period—she invited me to her home and even asked me to stay over from time to time. Her place was newly decorated and equipped with new furniture and home appliances. In fact, everything looked new in her house. Her husband gave me a short tour explaining to me how carefully he had selected materials and appliances. “I chose quality materials from Korea,” he said with pride. “We spent more than other people in decorating. I try to decorate in all Korean style.” As I visited the returnee/migrants’ houses in Yanbian, I

realized the importance they placed on demonstrating how much they spent purchasing and decorating their houses. Chinese apartments are sold unfinished, so the decoration itself is completely up to the homeowner, and matters critically in making distinctions of financial ability and taste. The “Korean style” of decoration, of which Park’s husband was so proud, is another commonality that I found in many newly decorated houses.⁹ Ms. Park moved into the house after she returned to China in 2006, following her long “detention” in Korea. But she spent less than a year in her new home before leaving for Korea to work for another three years. Although the house was purchased mostly with the remittances that she sent, Park had not actually lived there much because she worked in Korea for as long as her visa and her body allowed her to. It was now time again for her to finally spend a second year in her new place.

One evening, I stayed over at Park’s place. While we were making dumplings together for dinner, Park started sharing her disappointments about life in Yanbian. Despite the excitement of returning home, Park was not completely happy. The changes that had taken place during her absence were simply astonishing. Even though this was her home country, upon her return she had trouble even finding her own house. The material conditions of Yanbian people had improved while she was gone in Korea, and the cost of living had skyrocketed. Park’s loss of networking and social skills made her feel outdated. She was also worried that her savings from Korea might run out quickly. She thought it would be hard to find the right jobs, ones that would satisfy her needs and expectations. Aside from a small and reliable pension, there was essentially no social safety net. Park talked extensively, listing all the concerns that made her anxious.

⁹ Ambivalent feelings on the part of Korean Chinese toward Korea are common in Yanbian. For example, going to Korea “to work” came to be looked down upon, whereas going to Korea “for fun” became something to be proud of. The multiple meanings attached to “going to Korea” (*Hankuk ganda*) are analyzed in the next chapter.

She said that all her worries made her want to go back to Korea, where there is a “life.” In Yanbian, there was seemingly “too much life,” much of it spent eating, drinking, and hanging out with long-lost family and friends. But returnees found themselves anxious about not working (not making money) while having too much time. In other words, they did not feel that they were leading an actual life—they were just spending money and marking time while waiting to go back to Korea when the visa regulations allowed it. Moreover, “too-much-life” greatly burdened the returnees, particularly when they were invited to an event that was meant to show off the host’s economic capacity and to consolidate social networks. In China, once invited, one is supposed to invite back, to the same degree as welcomed. A generous invitation awaits another generous invitation in response. Park regarded this cultural protocol with unease.

Another good thing about being in Korea was that I didn’t have to attend parties like weddings and birthdays, and so I didn’t have to give monetary gifts. But here I can’t avoid it. We all know each other because Yanbian is a very small society. If I don’t go to my friend’s parties and don’t give them anything, they’d be pissed off and wouldn’t come to my party. Then I’d lose my connections and my face (*mianzi*). If I were unlucky, I could end up with a bad reputation. People are afraid of the bad consequences of not going to parties. Also, it’s not good to have too few guests at a party. The number of guests tells other people how big my network is and how good my relationships are with other people. It’s kind of a mutual collaboration whether we really want or need it or not. It’s superficial. People are grumpy about going to parties. However, if I want to live a life and have a business in Yanbian, it’s essential to go to parties and manage the relationships.

Park enjoyed these meeting and parties when she first returned from Korea. However, it quickly became a heavy financial burden, as she had to attend several parties a month. Half of her monthly expenses went toward monetary gifts for wedding and birthday parties. She thought the extravagant expense was crazy, and she could not afford to attend all the parties to which she was invited due to the high cost. “Since I’ve been in Korea, I don’t get ‘back

door money' from work units,"¹⁰ she told me. Therefore, everything has to be paid out of my pocket. It's just too much. Life here is too expensive. I don't make anything, but I sure spend a lot."

From Park's statement, we can find an interesting co-relationship; "too-much-time" leads to "too-much-life," which turns into "too-much-cost"—and no productivity. Some other ethnographic study also shows that time in Yanbian is mainly considered "time to lose money" or "time to make a workable body" (Kim 2009). From Park and also from many other returnees, I heard about the disjointed and ruptured relationship between earning and spending in the returnees' lives in Yanbian. The stories were always told in an anxious tone. Here, Harvey might offer a useful insight about the close link between production and consumption. Harvey suggests consumption and production can constitute an "immediate identity" because the action of production accompanies the consumption of raw materials, instruments of labor, and labor power, and the action of consumption provides the motive for production by promoting human needs and desire. Harvey points out how "productive consumption" and "consumptive production" lead to the social process of reproduction (Harvey 1999:80). Production and consumption are usually conceived as occurring in the same place at the same time. Yet for Korean Chinese returnees, the immediate identity between the two—productive consumption and consumptive production—has collapsed because in Yanbian there is only consumption, or "too-much-life" springing from "too-much-time" for these returning migrants. Production (earning money) occurs in Korea

¹⁰ The "work unit" used to be a complex place where Chinese workers lived and worked together. However, as privatization has accelerated, the work unit supported by the state lost competitive power in the market. Thus many work units in China had to close down. However, people in Yanbian often call their work place—whether in a governmental office or in private business—their "work unit." In this context, the "work unit" indicates a government-related job. Government jobs are commonly thought to confer stability, not only due to secure social pensions and benefits, but also extra money given as bonuses or gifts in order to maintain political networks.

whereas consumption (spending money) happens in Yanbian—a sharp geographical split between consumption and production. However, those who can integrate production with consumption and enjoy the “too-much-time” while maintaining a decent income (level of production) in Yanbian might again achieve the “immediate unity” suggested by Harvey. In addition, we can witness different attitudes toward “too-much-free-time” among different groups in Yanbian. In contrast to what Marx articulates, “*He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home*” (Marx 1988), which I discussed above, free time¹¹ does not feel free or at home to the returnees in the way that it does to well-off non-migrants in Yanbian. Adorno defines “free time” as an extension of labor time, “a mere appendage of work” (Adorno 1991:163), so free time is not in opposition to labor. In other words, given that only those who work can have “real” free time, the Korean Chinese returnees cannot enjoy the “free time” with no work in Yanbian if we follow Adorno’s logic.

Park and other returnees confessed that they missed the congenial environment of Yanbian during their lonely sojourns in Korea where they lived a “work-work” life. Yet when returnees have to live only on savings earned in Korea, the cost of “too-much-life” turns out to be an economic and emotional burden that causes them anxiety—money runs out so quickly. As a lone individual who cannot rely on any work unit money or “back door money” coming from the Chinese work unit, the excessive expenses of invitations and “great parties” were often beyond Park’s planned budget. Her friends or relatives tended to assume that she had earned a great deal of money in Korea, and thus expected her to spend generously when inviting them to meals and parties. These expectations were another

¹¹ Adorno discussed the concept of “free time” in *The Culture Industry* (1991) as a symptom of capitalist society. He argues, “Free time does not merely stand in opposition to labor. In a system where full employment itself has become the ideal, free time is nothing more than a shadowy continuation of labor” (168). Since free time is described as an extension of work, I see those who spend free time without working as not really enjoying free time.

burden, according to Park. “It’s not just one invitation. There are so many to do once I start inviting people.” This “too-much-life” exhausted the returnees, making them want to return to Korea, where they focused on working rather than spending. In Korea they could live on a steady income without random expenses for parties in order to maintain social networks. Korean Chinese migrants, including Park, said that they had gotten used to living as working individuals rather than as members of extensive, and expensive, social networks. In addition, the migrants felt they could not keep with the social tempo in Yanbian after growing accustomed to the “work-work” rhythm of Korea.

Home as a place of spending without earning makes these returnees want to get back to work in Korea as soon as possible, which causes emotional as well as financial anxiety. Home becomes a place that makes these returnees feel backward in comparison with the increasingly wealthy work unit officers who had not gone to Korea to work. Here, again, home is not like home. Life is split by the rhythm of “1-3-2,” making Yanbian a “consuming” place and Korea an “earning” place. Somewhat disillusioned by her time in Yanbian, Ms. Park returned expectantly to Korea to complete the full period that H-2 visa allows. Shedding further light on the complex temporalities shaped by spatial movement, the next section aims to investigate how Korean Chinese migrants switched from the embodied home rhythm of Yanbian into the rhythm of work in Korea—that is, from the temporality of “life” to that of “work.”

4.3 “3”: Three Years of Work

4.3.1 The Employment Agency

On a hot sunny day in August 2008, I called Ms. Park to let her know I was back in Seoul for the next six months for my research. Park gladly answered my phone call,

sounding out of breath, perhaps from being in the middle of work. She said she would call me back in a couple of hours. Park, in her late fifties, had become my closest friend among the Korean Chinese ladies who were volunteering in the church—where she was called “Ms. Cook.” Not only Park, but also other members of the church had now become free-moving subjects and were busy catching up on the time they had lost to periods of enforced inactivity. They made me realize how the imperative to “catch up” pushes most Korean Chinese workers to work in Korea without any days off. Therefore, it was extremely difficult for me to do interviews and meet Korean Chinese migrant workers when I was conducting field research in Korea in 2008—after the amnesty. There were many occasions on which migrant workers apologized for being unable to meet with me due to the demands of their schedules. Because of their unavailability, there was little I could do except wait until they had time off, which happened once or twice a month. I did my best to squeeze into their schedules and travel at their convenience in order not to waste their time in heavy traffic or long-distance commuting in Seoul. Their full schedules were mainly a consequence of the kind of work they did. Sometimes these workers were employed for more than twelve hours a day. Their schedules were frequently uncertain; they had to be on call, waiting for work to become available. Whatever their particular situation, most Korean Chinese workers tried to maximize their income in any given period and moved frequently in search of the best working conditions, the shortest working hours, and the highest wages. Park called me back in a few hours, welcoming me warmly. But, she said, “I am not sure when I can meet you because I have been working without any days off lately. Maybe if you come to the employment agency sometime in the morning, at about 7 a.m., I could meet you there. We can chat before I head to work at about 9.” I appreciated her wise time arrangement.

A few days later, I met Ms. Park in the Seoul Express Bus Terminal, the location of the employment office, where three lines of subways intersect and where the floating population and shopping stores are densely packed into the underground space. After exchanging greetings, we rushed to the office. I asked why she chose this particular agency and she answered that it was because the agency had a wide selection of jobs with good wages, and it was situated in an area packed with restaurants—a good source for job openings. Park said that, since she was not sure when she would go back to China, she did not want to work for a monthly salary. That would limit her mobility too much. Rather, she liked the freedom to move between jobs fairly often, in constant pursuit of better daily wages and nicer employers.

We arrived at the office—two desks, a couch, and two women busy answering phones. One of them, who seemed to be in charge of the office, noticed Park and welcomed her with a big smile because Park was a regular customer. But Park first had a complaint about her last job. The pay wasn't bad, she said, but the owner was "grumpy" and the restaurant "dirty." "You should pick a better job for me next time. Okay?" The woman assured Park she would, and suggested several new job openings, all cook or waitress positions in restaurants. Park picked a cooking position near the office and received the address and phone number of the restaurant. I asked if it is the case that there are more jobs than job seekers. The question triggered a conversation between the woman and Park.

Agency manager: Of course, there are always a lot more jobs looking for good Korean Chinese workers like Ms. Park than job seekers. The employers are always complaining about the working capacity and quality of Korean Chinese. After the amnesty was granted, Korean Chinese don't work as hard as when they were illegal. They are not desperate any more.

Park: You're right. The newly arrived Korean Chinese, they don't know how to work in Korea. I have been in Korea for ten years. I have become an expert at working in Korean restaurants—almost like a Korean. But the newcomers are just

looking for money without knowing how to work. They are degrading the Korean Chinese reputation. The bad reputation seriously works against me.

Agency manager: Yes, Korean Chinese are always looking for new jobs asking for more money. What employers want to change their workers every day? Now, Korean Chinese are spoiled and not working hard. They spend money like Koreans. They should save money and think of going back to China soon. But they buy expensive cell phones, drink a lot, eat out a lot, live in a nice house, pay high rent. They're here to make money, not to live here forever.

Park: That's why there's the saying: the longer you stay in Korea, the poorer you get. It's true that among my friends who've been in Korea for as long as I have, nobody has made as much money as me. I control my money very tightly. My husband cannot use the money I send back without my permission, not at all. I'll go back to China after working in Korea for a couple more years.

Behind Park, there were several more Korean Chinese women waiting for their turns. The agency manager had to go back to work. Phones in the office kept ringing, as people offered and inquired about new daily jobs. Leaving the office, Park spoke with some disdain about the attitude of the agency woman. "She pretends to be kind. But she's disrespectful of Korean Chinese. Look at what she said. She thinks Korean Chinese only know money-money and we Korean Chinese are inferior to Koreans. Don't Koreans like money?" Park asked if I agreed, and I said I did. She was clearly dissatisfied with the conversation she had just had, even though had she portrayed herself as a "good" Korean Chinese, working hard without wasting money. At the same time, she made no attempt to avoid the stigma of being a money seeker, asking, "We're here to make money, aren't we?"

I was struck by the conversation for several reasons. First, the women shared assumptions about "good" Korean Chinese and "bad" Korean Chinese, as defined by their work ethic and the extent to which they save money. "Good" Korean Chinese don't move often between jobs, don't spend excessively, and have an eventual plan to return to China. This assumption leads to the idea that Korean Chinese should consider Korea as a temporary working place, not as a permanent home. Thus, saving money—not wasting it

like Koreans—enables the “good” Korean Chinese to get back to China as soon as possible. Another assumption that lies behind the conversation is that Korean Chinese have their own kind or level of consumption in contrast to that of Koreans. In fact, the wage gap between Koreans and Korean Chinese in the service industries and physical labor is minimal. In fact, Korean Chinese with expertise as carpenters, electricians, or skilled¹² construction workers might earn more than average Koreans. Overall, these assumptions have contributed to reinforcing or reproducing the representation of Korean Chinese—“almost Korean, yet not quite”—as temporary residents who should not be consuming as much as Koreans.

The labor market, through institutions like the employment agency office, assesses the value of Korean Chinese as physical and service workers. Korean Chinese job seekers need to tolerate the nuanced disrespect of Korean agency workers and employers, while at the same time showing a capacity to handle long hours and a demanding work load. Workers who have been able to satisfy these two conditions might obtain better-paid and less difficult or physically demanding jobs in the future. The agency is responsible not only for assigning the workers to appropriate jobs, but also for mediating work conditions and wages between the employers and employees, circulating the recognition and reputation of both parties. In this manner, the agency is a crucial mediator for Korean Chinese, in the sense that it plays a role in sorting out “good” Korean Chinese from “bad” ones, based on their previous work experiences and reputation. That is why somebody like Park, who can work “almost like a Korean,” can get a good reference from the agency and be assigned to a well-paid and comfortable job, whereas newcomer Korean Chinese workers tend to keep moving from job to job until they build a certain level of recognition and reputation.

¹² The daily wage for electricians and carpenters ranges from \$100 to \$150, with a monthly income that could range from \$2500 to \$3500. Korean GDP per capita was \$25,910 in 2010. Working hours are the highest in the world — 2255.8 hours/year.

Despite the wide presence of Korean Chinese migrants in Korea, mass media and public discourses have stigmatized Korean workers as “opportunistic,” “immoral,” “lacking in work ethic,” and “low quality labor.” There seems to be an increasing tendency to think of Korean Chinese as job-jumping money-seekers.¹³ One Korean employment agency worker, whose attitude is representative of many I have spoken with, told me that “there are not so many Korean Chinese I would want to arrange for hiring.” At the same time, however, Korean Chinese labor intensely occupies the service sector, being especially dominant among waitresses and caregivers. It was almost impossible not to encounter Korean Chinese waitresses when eating out in Seoul. Korean customers can tell the fact that “they are from China” from the Yanbian accent strangely mixed with a Seoul accent. The slight distinction tends to lead to an intuitive discrimination marking Korean Chinese from China as not fully Korean. Regardless of the disdainful stigma attached to Korean Chinese, however, these workers, such as Park, often express their confidence as money seekers by saying, “We are here to make money. What is wrong with seeking money-money?” Seeking money is the very reason they are in the country, and it provides them with a strong drive to get through their exhausting and stressful time in Korea. Experienced Korean Chinese workers often say that they have gotten used to and even come to like their tense and fast-paced “Korean time.” In particular, nostalgia for their “Korean time” peaked when they returned to China—where they were “doing nothing but spending money” (as I detail in the previous section). Despite

¹³ A random encounter with a taxi driver indicated to me the depth of some Koreans’ feelings against Korean Chinese migrants. On a summer day in 2008 in Korea, I took a taxi in *Garibongdong*, a neighborhood referred to as “Korean Chinese Town” in Seoul. The taxi driver started a conversation with me, expressing his fury about the unruly and troublesome Korean Chinese who, he thought, caused social disorder. He also claimed that Korean Chinese are taking job opportunities from Koreans and siphoning money from Korea to China. According to the Korean Labor Research Institute (2010), however, the labor markets for Korean and Korean Chinese workers do not overlap--Koreans and Korean Chinese are not competing in the same job market. Thus the tension is heavily emotional and discursive, rather than simply a reflection of actual conflict in the labor market.

the earnest wish to return to Yanbian after living as long-term undocumented workers in Korea, Park and many other Korean Chinese testified that, once they got back to Yanbian, they missed the heavy and regular work schedule in Korea.

4.3.2 Working Time

The population of Korean Chinese living in Korea has reached about half a million. Over time, the occupational fields of Korean Chinese have gradually diversified and professionalized as more Korean Chinese have pursued higher education and become academics or entrepreneurs, or have gone to work for globally well-known conglomerates such as Samsung and LG. However, most Korean Chinese are still concentrated in the service sector and construction. In these fields, there are broadly two kinds of wage systems—one is based on day-to-day employment and the other is based on month-to-month. Once the wage system is decided—usually in the job announcement—the rhythm of work follows.

I will detail Park's everyday life as following. Park has worked in many restaurants in Seoul as cook or waitress—very common jobs for Korean Chinese women in Korea. Park said that she worked mostly from 10 a.m. to 10 or 11 p.m. While work was *supposed* to end at 11, she rarely left on time. She was often asked to clean up leftover dishes and prepare for tomorrow's orders by the owner of the restaurant. She did not have a moment of rest during working hours—as it is put in Korean, “there is no moment to open the eyes and nose.” Most nights she had to rush to catch the last subway back home, arriving around midnight, and falling asleep around 1 a.m. Then she had to get up at 7 a.m. to get ready for work in the morning. Namely, her time is constituted simply by “working time” and “sleeping time” (Kim 2009). She repeated the same pattern for ten years—except when she was being

pursued as an undocumented worker, and thus had to work secretly and irregularly. Since a day off meant she was “losing” (i.e., not earning) her daily wage, Park tried not to take any more than one or two days off a month, usually for special occasions, reminding herself, “I have been like a working machine.” Even though Park grew accustomed to the intensity and pace of working in Korean restaurants, the chronic lack of sleep exhausted her. On days with a heavy and demanding schedule, she took Chinese medicine and multiple nutrients to maintain her health, since being sick meant losing wages. She has developed her own way of justifying the exhausting “work-work” life in Korea, saying to me, “I can forget my tiredness right away as soon as I get the cash in my hand at the end of day. Then I get up again and go to work the next day.”

The power of cash helped Park forget her fatigue and gave her the drive to go on. Daily income in the service field ranges from \$50 to \$70 for women working in restaurants, and \$70 to \$90 for men working in the construction field. Mostly, this is compensation for more than twelve hours’ of labor depending on the kind of job and the extent of experience. These are demanding jobs compared to the work they get in China in factories and offices, and even on farms. Korea is a country notorious for its speedy pace of life and the heavy workload heaped on migrants. Park and other Korean Chinese workers said it was extremely hard for their bodies to get used to the intensity of labor in Korea for the first two years. As time went by, however, the heavy work became a “habit” (*Inibakhida* in Korean),¹⁴ and the pace is inscribed in the body as Foucault suggests in *Discipline and Punish* (152). Yet, even

¹⁴ In “*Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism*,” E.P. Thompson points out time, in the industrial society, becomes abstract, homogenous, linear, and task-fragmented whereas the pre-industrial society experiences time as concrete, cyclical, and task-oriented (Thompson 1967).

under the discipline mode of working, proper compensation for labor is still the key motivation. If there is no compensation, there is no work.

As half a million Korean Chinese have occupied diverse sectors in the Korean labor market over the past twenty years, they have developed a collective, informal understanding of the price of labor according to its duration, rhythm, and intensity—it is an intuitive measurement of labor value structured through many years of work experience. “If the work is too demanding or tiring,” Park told me, “I will search for another job right away because there are a lot of jobs out there.” The movement between jobs is so frequent that the migrant workers I knew were usually working different jobs whenever I saw them. It might be because wages are structured on the daily interval, thus it is easy for workers to quit or for the employer to fire them if expectations are not mutually met. More critically, Korean Chinese workers have taken advantage of a churning, fast-paced job market to constantly seek better opportunities. It has become the usual pattern of job-seeking among Korean Chinese migrants in Korea. “Which Korean Chinese would work in the same job for years nowadays under bad working conditions?” Park asked rhetorically. Although there is no job security in daily wage labor, and the daily wage determines a large portion of her current and future economic life, Park does not consider herself simply subservient to her employers, as she can always respond to unfavorable conditions by moving on to a better-paid job. At the same time, Park is certainly subject to the conditions of wage labor, as she places her trust in both the power of the cash that sustains her and enables her to risk short periods between jobs while she is pursuing better opportunities, and the power of the market to provide those opportunities.

4.3.3 Body Clock

On top of flexibility and a work rhythm that enables them to make relatively easy moves to better paid jobs, other matters that Korean Chinese workers seriously consider include autonomy and friendly working conditions. For example, Ms. Kang from Yanbian, another experienced cook in her late fifties (whom I also met from the church), did not like to change jobs often in search of better wages. A talented cook, she has enjoyed good relations with all her employers. For the last ten years, she has tried to work hard to become a “good” Korean Chinese while seeking jobs that offer her flexibility as well as stability. She explains,

Once an owner recognizes my ability, she or he tries to keep me by giving me tips or a bonus from time to time. Also, as we become personally close, I might get a more flexible schedule, too. Then I can visit China for weeks for some family events and still go back to the same job [in Korea]. The restaurant owners would keep the position for me because they like me to work for them. It's still a daily wage, but there would be a little of a raise over time. I can have more stability in this way. Getting recognition from owners is the key to making money in a comfortable and stable way in Korea. To me, freedom [non-intervention of the owner in her work] is also important because I get nervous when the owner is watching and grumpy about what I'm doing. So I don't like to work as a nanny or caregiver for the sick or the old. Doing those jobs, I'd be stuck someplace without being able to come and go freely. That kind of job doesn't give me freedom. I couldn't go out or rest whenever I want. I'd be required to constantly serve the people in need. However good the money, it wouldn't be worth the work.

Whenever I talked to Kang, she always told me about the owner of the restaurant she was working in at the time, which was the most important factor in deciding whether she stayed at a job or not. She loved the freedom of flexible labor in the sense that she could easily quit and find another better job. But she considered freedom to be more than simply the ability to change jobs. “Freedom” for her included the capacity to negotiate with her employer regarding wages and days off. In other words, she valued freedom from an overworked schedule and from an over-policing gaze. Kang believed that she could make better money only when she had some kind of job stability in addition to simple flexibility. “If we move

too much between jobs, we cannot make money,” she said. “It’s better to stay in one place rather than move around.” When Kang wasn’t in possession of a satisfactory and stable job, it made her nervous, which caused other health issues. If she was sick, she could not work. If she could not work, she believed, she would “lose” money. Kang counted every day, every moment in Korea as moneymaking—time was literally money to her.

However, her body clock keeps ticking—she is aging. “When I was healthy and fairly young, I didn’t worry much about my body,” she told me. “I’m already in my late fifties. I know my time in Korea won’t last much longer, although the visa will allow me to stay. I feel I cannot push myself as much as before—like when I was in my forties.” I noticed that Kang was very careful about her health. Whenever I visited her place—living in a small room with a kitchen inside her room and an outside toilet, located in a soon-to-be developed area in the northern part of Seoul—she showed me multiple Chinese medicines she was taking for her health. Her husband in Yanbian sent some, and she brought some from China herself. Kang also explained how she ate food that was good for certain organs and specific symptoms. She was knowledgeable and proud of her methods in caring for herself. “No health, no money in Korea. If I’m sick, my time in Korea ends.” Over and over again, my conversations with Kang reinforced the entangled relationship between body, money, and time.

Along with the structural constraint imposed by the visa regulations that assign Korean Chinese to a specific kind of flexible labor, I take into critical consideration the body’s capacity for laboring. Despite the constant “caring for the self” and government of the self—in Foucault’s term—that these workers have engaged in, the working body has definite limits. In addition, caring for the self can paradoxically cause the body to become



Photo 9. Ms. Kang's Room. By June Hee Kwon (2011)

more vulnerable by increasing its exposure to longer, more exploitive work conditions.

Korean Chinese migrant workers, whose bodies are usually their only means of production, have to rely on those bodies to produce the same amount of labor day after day. In order to have “tomorrow as today,” as Marx elaborates in the chapter called “Working Days” in *Capital*, the body must be rested, fed, and clothed, so as to reproduce today’s labor for tomorrow. For physical laborers, a healthy body is the fundamental factor that determines whether they can keep working in Korea or not. As Kang said, “What I’m the most afraid of is to be sick.” Illness was her worst enemy, one that could ruin her time in Korea along with her financial plans. However, Kang and other workers who rely heavily on their own bodies for work do not know when they will be sick—thus the extreme care they take with their health, in order to prevent or delay the onset of illness. Both Park and Kang worry about

their unpredictable bodies, often qualifying statements with phrases such as, “Before I get too old,” or “As long as I am healthy”—their own ambiguous deadlines for their working time in Korea. Yet it is largely because of the intensive, long hours they have worked as cooks, day after day, that their bodies have deteriorated over the last ten years. Many of Kang’s friends returned to China unable to work any longer because they had grown too sick or too weak from the physical labor in Korea. “You remember when we were chased after by the police when we were in church, right?” Kang asked me once. “Look at us now. Everybody can come to Korea to make money. Now this time is good. We are completely free. We don’t have to run away from the police anymore. But my body doesn’t allow me to work here forever. I know the ending time is coming soon in a few years. I should make as much as I can until then.”

The stories of Kang and Park show how Korean Chinese migrants are constrained by the peculiar temporality of visa regulations, the types of work they do, and the body’s capacity. This temporality has governed the Korean Chinese working body and, in addition, the circulation of service labors. This limitation of migrant workers’ time in Korea pushes them to maximize their income during the time they have. As a result, the necessary “surplus labor time” necessary to reproduce labor for tomorrow, as Marx elaborates, is shortened or deferred until the one-year enforced return to China. The three-year intensive extraction of labor time in Korea has caused Korean Chinese working bodies to burn out. Kang wanted to take care of her body not for its own sake, but rather to prolong her working time in Korea, thus securing her money and future. Here, caring for bodies not only accomplishes economic gain, but also the further alienation of workers from their bodies.

In fact, by the time I met Park and Kang in Yanbian after three years of intensive labor in Korea, they were exhausted and sick—their bodies were debilitated. Whether intended or not, the “1-3-2” rhythm has created a unique temporality of working and resting at both individual and collective levels. Additionally, it has resulted in entrenching its constantly moving subjects in certain habits and emotions. Korean Chinese migrant workers hope for predictability (that tomorrow will be the same as today) while, at the same time seeking flexibility in the hope that tomorrow might be better than today. The future cannot be imagined in the long term, but is rather renewed and repeated every day by the payment of daily wages—the future that Korean Chinese workers visualize is as short as one day long.

4.4 “2”: Preparing for Two Years of Work

4.4.1 Hopes and Cares

On a summer night in 2009, I received a phone call from Ms. Kang, who was returning to China as compelled by the visa regulation—she had used up her three years of work in Korea. She suggested catching up by inviting me to stay over her place in *huolong*, one of Yanbian’s cities, which is mostly populated by ethnic Korean farmers and located an hour away from Yanji. Kang apologized for not being able to call me earlier because she had been sick for a while after her return to China. She said she was now feeling a bit better. I went to *Huolong* a few days later to meet her. Kang was staying with her husband, who had waited ten years for her to come back. He used to be a factory worker, but had not been healthy enough to undertake heavy labor in Korea, so Kang herself had decided to go to Korea to work. Since then, Kang had been the main breadwinner of the household, sending money home from Korea. I remembered that she had often showed concern about her husband’s addiction to *mahjong*, a traditional Chinese game often played for money. She had

heard that it was common for Korean Chinese men with wives working in Korea to become addicted to gambling and fall deeply into debt. Fortunately, Kang's husband was not so deeply addicted that he gambled away the money that she sent, but he played often enough to worry her.

She told me how much she missed her two sons when her status as an undocumented worker kept her from coming back to China. She had been in Korea since 1998, and in that time they had both grown up and graduated from college. Kang was proud of her sons and also of the fact that she had been able to financially support their education. After college, both sons obtained respectable jobs and lived in Shenyang, an industrial city in Northeast China. She considered her sons' achievements as part of her life success, believing that "they are my hopes." While going through hardships in Korea, Kang had two dreams: sending her sons to college, and buying a new apartment in Yanji, the capital of Yanbian. The first dream had come true. But the second dream was still on the way. Unlike other Korean Chinese migrants who earned enough to purchase cars and an apartment or two, Kang did not save enough money. Her earnings were mainly used to pay for college and to support her family's daily living costs. In fact, when Kang invited me, she hesitated, and then warned, "My house is an old one. The toilet is outside. The kitchen is not a modern one. There's only one big room in my house. If you're okay with this arrangement, you're more than welcome to stay with me."

When I saw her, for the first time in a year, I noticed that she had lost a significant amount of weight. She seemed feeble, unlike in Seoul, where she used to be full of energy and the will to work. She appeared even more anxious, and started listing all the problems she had with being at home. As she warned, her house was an old-style Chinese house, one

of four or five houses that were all tightly connected wall to wall. There was no indoor bathroom, only a public bathroom shared with dozens of neighbors. The outside toilet—the public bathroom—was even harder to use in winter. Kang said that the kitchen without a sink or counter prevented her from standing up when she was cooking; she had to cook crouching on the floor, which caused her back pain. She didn't have a private room in her house all to herself, which put her in close quarters with her husband—who did nothing but watch TV or play card games by himself. Her savings were running out because the cost of living was higher than she had expected. She had a list full of inconveniences and discomforts.

In addition to her overall dissatisfaction with being at home, Kang was ill, despite having been cautious about her physical well-being. Her symptoms broadly ranged from stomachaches to insomnia, back pain, and, sometimes, pain in her joints. She had visited several well-known Chinese doctors (*mingyi* in Chinese) in Yanbian for acupuncture and herbal medicine. She went hiking or walking every morning, even with these chronic pains. She also received electronic massage treatment, which was becoming popular in Yanbian. She did not want to go out with her friends because she had to drink and eat with them, and she thought that—living in Yanbian time—was too expensive. Regardless of her various attempts to feel better, Kang still felt nervous and uncertain about her health. As she had told me in Seoul, “What I’m most afraid of is being sick.” The state of her health would be pivotal when she decided whether she could return to work in Korea in a year. During my visit her anxieties seemed to peak:

I should become stronger before I go back to Korea. But I’m not sure if I can be healthier in a year. I’ve been burnt out for ten years. I’m not as healthy and young as before. If I push myself too much, I could have a more serious disease. I’m more afraid of that. But I still have work to do. I want to move to a new apartment in Yanji. Also, my sons are waiting for me to return to open a restaurant in Shenyang.

But I don't think we have enough money for that yet. I should make more for a couple of years. So I need to stay strong.

Even though she had successfully realized one of her dreams in supporting her sons' college education, Kang was desperate for more money, not only to move to an apartment in Yanji, but also to support her sons' weddings. Kang felt she needed to purchase houses for them, too. She had been making fairly good money as a recognized cook by the restaurant owners she had worked for in Korea. But the rising cost of living in China seemed so hard to catch up with—for herself as well as for her husband, who could no longer work. Given her desperation, going back to Korea was a necessary choice for her, although in the long run she would eventually return to China to live with her family. In making all her dreams happen, her body, in particular, her *healthy* body was a key site because it was again her only means of production. Hence, care for her body was a critical way to protect her future prospects. But there was no doubt that her body was getting old and fragile. And even though she was a former factory worker (an occupation once represented as the ideal socialist subject who enjoyed total economic and social security), Kang did not have a reliable social safety net for her retirement. Although she rigorously prepared for going back to Korea by taking special care of her body, her body remained vulnerable and unpredictable—she could not know when she would be sick again.

Her life was limited not only by visa regulations, but also by her body's clock. As long as her body allowed her to work, she believed that she could support herself and her dreams by making money in Korea. China, she was sure, would not be the place for her to create a new life. She was feeling too late and too old to join the rising economy of China. Her year in Yanbian was supposed to have been resting time to reproduce “surplus labor,” in Marx's term. Instead it caused mounting discomfort and dissatisfaction. A couple of months seemed

too long for spending without earning, while at the same time it seemed too short for physically recovering from the stress of heavy labor from the past decade. Kang carefully monitored her uncertain body's clock in order to decide whether she would be able to reenter the circuit of labor migration—the rhythm of circulation.

Ms. Park also was getting ready to go back to Korea. After her experience spending but not making money in Yanbian, Park's calculating mind told her she would be better off going back to Korea. One more day in China meant losing money for one more day. At the same time, one more day in Korea meant one more day of wages earned. To Park, China is a land of excessive expenses whereas Korea is a place of earning and having too-little-time to spend on too-much-life. After ten years of a bitter life as a floating migrant subject, Park came to believe that time was not a natural phenomenon. Time was, instead, a fundamental resource that needed to be converted into money. She just could not waste time on Yanbian's frenetic social life because wasted time felt like money being thrown away—and money is often proverbially compared to blood among Korean Chinese, considered as precious as a part of the body. Park said, "If I'm stingy, my friends accuse me of being someone who seeks only money-money. Sometimes I just ache to leave everything behind and go to work in Korea—although I hated to work when I was there." Yes, Park missed home very much when undergoing the risk of deportation in Korea. At the same time, she became sick of Yanbian after returning. "Home is not like home."

Unlike government officers with their pensions, Park could not draw on government or work unit money to help her economic future. She had nothing but daily wages to save for her old age. In the end, Park's safety net consisted of nothing other than making as much money as possible in Korea until she could no longer work. She was tired

of too-much-time, too-much-life, and too-much-cost in Yanbian. It was time to go back to Korea. As she returned to the circuit of transnational migration she promised herself, “I’ll be in Korea for two more years as the work visa allows. Then I’ll see what to do.” When Park experienced competing temporalities between working rhythms and resting rhythms, production time and consumption time, she chose to step again into the rhythm of work, drawn by both its predictability and flexibility. It’s where she felt more at home for now.

4.5 Conclusion

While exploring split bodies, time, and life of Korean Chinese migrants after amnesty, my finding in this chapter is that migrants’ freedom of movement exacerbates their vulnerability. Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* posit labor as an essential activity of humans that renders them distinct from animals (1978). In the same vein, labor is “the living, form-giving fire”: labor serves as a basic causal force or principle of the historical motion of being (Weeks 1998:122). Certainly, as Weeks elaborates, labor comes into play as the “principle of internal genesis” and “immanent creative principle” of human beings. Park and Kang would not deny that labor is a vital force of life, given that they firmly believed that there was no “life” for them in Yanbian since they did not “work” there. They missed their time in Korea, even though it was extremely tiring and hard on their bodies. They believed that it was a way to provide for their own futures. However, the irony is obvious: the more they care for their bodies, and thus the future, the more their bodies become worn out. Caring for their bodies culminates in the deterioration of their bodies because it enables the migrants to maximize the extraction of labor and prolong their working time as much as possible. Here, labor itself alienates these workers from their own selves and their own labor. To Korean Chinese migrants, resting time in Yanbian is, in fact, a restless resting that

involves the anxiety of excessive spending without making money. Resting time is not actually a “rest,” but rather a temporary pause in “real” life—that is, working and making money. Resting time’s sole utility for them is as a period of recuperation, to allow their aging bodies to recover from the demands of Korea. As a result, the returnees cannot feel free during the restless resting time under the pre-determined rhythm of “1-3-2” that structures their movement.

After coming back from follow-up research in Yanbian to Seoul in July 2011, I met Park and Kang in Seoul again. Kang was at first too busy to meet because she was working as a cook from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eventually, we met on her once-a-month day off and had dinner at her place. She proudly told me that she had finally gotten the apartment in Yanji she had always wanted, although she still owed money on it. “As you know,” she said, “I get easily nervous. The debt makes me so anxious nowadays. In order to pay it off, I might have to keep going for another three years in Korea. What can I do if I go back to China now? It’s hard to work here, but I love to have money in my hands at the end of the day.” Kang, in fact, looked a lot healthier and livelier than when I had last seen her in Yanbian. Again she showed me the many kinds of herbal medicines she had brought from China and the healthy fruit juices she made for herself. Her body care continued.

Ms. Park, meanwhile, was now serving as a live-in-domestic worker for a couple, both medical doctors, in *Apgujeongdong* (one of the wealthy areas in Seoul). This job allowed her to go out only on the weekends. “It’s good money,” she told me, “but the kids are so spoiled. The house work is too much. There’s no resting time. I hate to work for this young couple. So I’m looking for another job. It should be a freer job, with shorter working hours.” Despite her present dissatisfaction, she said, she would work for another three years in

Korea until she made money enough to purchase houses for her sons. For now, Park was simply hoping that she could stay healthy long enough to achieve that goal.

Back in Seoul, the rhythm of “1-3-2” was still at work in the lives of Park and Kang as they navigated the combined temporalities of visa regulation, labor, and their own bodies. And Ms. Park and Kang were still trying to move in accord with the rhythm. They hoped that tomorrow they would be as healthy as today in order to continue to work. They also hoped that tomorrow they would make more money than today to keep life moving forward. Yet the rhythm of circulation is subject to political whims and contingencies,¹⁵ and the future of Korean Chinese workers is contingent upon the recognition of the Korean government, which has never really decided whether they are overseas Koreans or cheap migrant labor.

¹⁵ The Korean government has changed the policy again, now requiring Korean Chinese to return to China after using up the “1-3-2” working period. This has caused confusion and trouble amongst Korean Chinese migrant workers. NGOs, related scholars, and Korean Chinese activists have held meetings to criticize the fluctuating migrant policy toward Korean Chinese. But the altered policy remains pending.

Chapter 5. *Vigilant Ethnicity:* Encounters with the Forbidden Homeland

On a freezing and snowy day in November 2009, I headed to Longjing (one of six cities in Yanbian) to meet Mr. Kim Chul and his friends, all longtime Communist Party members. Mr. Kim, in his late sixties, was a retired government official, a dedicated Communist Party member, and a passionate writer full of energy, humor, and wit. Since my first visit to Yanbian in 2006, he had been an excellent guide, helping set up meetings with other Korean Chinese, and arranging my visits to farming towns, even though foreign researchers were informally discouraged from doing this. Eager to support my research, Mr. Kim had appointed himself my history tutor as long as I made sure to keep the following promises with him: 1) “Do not criticize the Communist Party”; 2) “Do not criticize socialism”; 3) “Do not ask for help or any information related to North Korea”; and 4) “Do not refer to me by my real name in your work.” Whenever he repeated the promises, I sensed that his ambivalence might come from two directions. On the one hand, many Korean visitors had caused trouble for him by breaking rules or criticizing China in public despite his warnings. On the other hand, he still wanted to help Koreans because of the shared “Korean” ethnicity, even though he was very likely to be investigated by the Chinese police afterwards. My understanding of his willingness to help, along with his discomfort about doing so, led me to make this assurance: I would do my best to follow his “guidelines” and honor our friendship. Before I headed to the lunch meeting that Mr. Kim organized with old communist party members on that day, he repeated one more time that I should not criticize China, socialism, or the Communist Party. “I will keep that in my mind,” I firmly promised.

In fact, Mr. Kim was not the only Korean Chinese who expressed such caution to me. Although I was a South Korean researcher who shared an ethnicity with them, I was still a

foreigner. The vigilant attitude frequently made it difficult to arrange interviews with local Korean Chinese. They would ask, “How can I be sure I’ll be okay after I talk to you?” Some were apparently saying, behind my back, “What is she doing here? Is she a spy, and for which country?” The suspicion was probably not personal. Rather, it attached to contact with “others” in general. Such contacts had brought about random political persecution and victimization in the past, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. At the same time, the constant wariness confused me given the current state of affairs, with numerous Korean Chinese making frequent trips back and forth between China and Korea, and the intimate cultural ties to Korea that manifest themselves on a daily basis, especially through television and other mass media. But the seemingly contradictory vigilance about Korean contacts is too common to dismiss, even in the midst of the rampant and preponderant *Korean Wind* that sweeps into every corner of daily life in Yanbian. What, then, makes most Korean Chinese wary of Koreans or Korea-related issues and concerns? What is the role of the *Korean Wind* in shaping this collective discomfort and suspicion alongside remittance development—which is, of course, mostly generated by money made in Korea? In what way have Korean Chinese try to make sense of the current state of Chinese socialism, in particular “Yanbian socialism” as reshaped by the impact of the *Korean Wind*?

I already have introduced the structure of feeling across Yanbian induced by the unstable influx of remittance, examining it in previous chapters through the lens of anticipation, hesitation, and waiting. In this chapter, I continue to develop the discussion on structure of feeling—the particular vigilance and wariness—by placing a new focus on the narratives of Communist Party members who are at the intersection of the post-Cold War era and post-socialist politics. These narratives will help me to elaborate on the attitudes of Korean Chinese party members, who retain faith in socialism and the Party, toward modern tensions between

China and Korea, socialism and capitalism, politics and economy. In particular, the stories tell us about the *split politics* that these party members have manifested; they show a strong political faith to the state of China and socialism, while treating the relationship with Korea in a mere economic term in the midst of the *Korean Wind*.

My aim is threefold in exploring these stories. First, I introduce the epochal moment of encounter between Korean Chinese and the homeland, South Korea, forbidden for four decades, highlighting the constant Korean Chinese anxiety toward Korea. Second, I analyze Korean Chinese party members' attempts to balance their ethnicity and subjectivity between China and Korea in response to the *Korean Wind*. In previous eras, talk about "ethnicity" was much discouraged, and any claim of ethnicity was seen as detracting from one's Chinese nationality. In recent years, by stark contrast, discourse about ethnic identity has bloomed, in particular, characterizing Korean "*Chinese*," with an emphasis on Chinese nationality. Third, I examine the narrative strategy (split politics) of these members as they discuss transnational migration to Korea as an economic phenomenon while remaining politically faithful to socialism and China. This chapter argues that the *Korean Wind* has produced and reinforced a wary ethnic politics among Korean Chinese communist party members, who are attempting to make sense of their place in contemporary Chinese socialism by constructing a vigilant ethnicity.

5.1 Old Secrets: The Forbidden Homeland

5.1.1 On the Borderland

Yanbian has been a locus for numerous political and security concerns. It shares a border with North Korea, an over-layered, complex homeland that, as Cadre Yang, portrayed in Chapter 1, is a source of political anxiety and tension. As an increasing number of North Korean refugees cross the Tumen River to escape from dire poverty and political repression,

border control on the China side has become more militarized. In addition, North Korea has been a difficult place to enter from the South Korean end because the peninsula has remained divided since the Korean War was suspended in 1953. This has made Yanbian the easiest and most reliable route into and out of North Korea, which has sometimes resulted in the increased political scrutiny—international and national—on the province whenever regional tensions mount. Yanbian is indisputably Chinese territory. But it has become a channel, a link between North Korea and the outside world, especially South Korea, China, and other countries, possessing the need to engage with the unpredictable North Korean regime. The particular geopolitical border location means that Yanbian retains some of the old Cold War anxiety, and places the Korean Chinese who live there, directly as well as indirectly, under the political influence of both Koreas.

My hiking trips in Yanbian, which I have discussed in earlier chapters, heightened my awareness of being in such a borderland. One trip, in March 2009, took place shortly after two American journalists crossed the Tumen River, and the North Korean military arrested them. When the news broke, rumors rapidly spread: the Korean Chinese guide, who belonged to a church in a small town in Yanbian and helped the journalists to get around in the area, was sentenced to several years of imprisonment by the Chinese government; the Han Chinese translator was still on the run; the two American journalists were sentenced to twelve years of hard labor by North Korea. The rumors were clearly exaggerated and contained few specifics, yet they aroused a palpable political fear in the conversations of my fellow hikers. One of them, who worked for the government, gave us his take:

When the news got out, a lot of journalists came to Yanbian. The five star hotels in Yanji [the capital of Yanbian] were all booked up. We were told by the central government not to talk to any foreigner, let alone those reporters. It was a pretty anxious moment. Since that event occurred, the Communist Party has paid closer attention to Yanbian as a border zone and added special border controls, while South

Koreans have become more interested in Yanbian as a channel to get to know more about North Korea. Because of its proximity to North Korea, Yanbian's development has been neglected while its border status gets all the attention. Juni, you should be careful when you go to the border towns. Don't be reckless like those American journalists [laughs].

I often faced this kind of half-joking warning throughout my fieldwork, a joke that also implicitly conveyed the unease with which Korean Chinese contemplated the prospect of accompanying me—a South Korean foreigner studying in the US, a potential troublemaker, possibly a spy. The suspicions are reasonable, however. Some Korean Chinese who befriended South Koreans have been accused of selling Chinese state secrets, and persecuted and punished for it. Rumors of such punishments haunted the region and amplified the fear. Another member of the hiking club summed up the situation: “It is because Yanbian is an ethnic borderland under the special political attention of the Communist Party.”

I have witnessed, time and again, the concept of “border” and “borderland” as a core principle of Korean Chinese subjectivity—the subjectivity of an ethnic minority within the Chinese state, living adjacent to a divided homeland. The borderland is an in-between interstice where different cultural values and intersubjective experiences are negotiated (Bhabha 1994). The borderland is an ambiguous sphere that links two worlds, imbuing its people with peripheral vision, a sense of marginalization, and a liminal feeling that “I am neither here nor there”(Zavella 2011). It is also an overlapping and layered space where people can see “double” worlds simultaneously and express both complex identities and resistance against the dominant social order (Anzaldúa 2000). Along with this intersectionality, hybridity, and multiplicity, borderlands also harbor the desolate, disconnected, and displaced feeling that Homi Bhabha calls “unhomeliness”—the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiation (Bhabha 1994: 13). As I portrayed in previous chapters, Korean Chinese migrants who live and work in

Korea have developed a feeling of estrangement upon returning home. Confronted by new developments in Yanbian that occurred in their absence, they coined the now common saying, “*Home is not like home.*” Belongingness is revealed to be precarious and the concept of home is unsettled by the mobility of transnational labor migration.

This “unhomeliness” also takes the form of melancholia, a condition generated by the loss of a loved one who cannot be grieved properly (Butler 1997; Freud 2001[1917]; Eng and Han 2003; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Zavella 2011).¹ I take melancholia as a useful lens onto the dominant structure of feeling of Yanbian: anticipation and waiting, the affect expressed in the local saying, “Everybody is gone with the Korean wind.” This constant and common melancholia as “unfinished process of grieving” (Butler 1997) is part and parcel of everyday life in Yanbian. The lost ones are not permanently lost, however. They send money (remittances) to their families in Yanbian on a regular basis (see chapter 3). They are expected to return eventually. In this manner, these migrants are not truly lost, but rather temporarily lost, with reunification constantly deferred. Under this circumstance of frequent *coming and going*, Korean Chinese have inhabited a particular melancholic and unhomely affect, generated by the geographical and cultural borderland, ever since Korean Chinese settled in Yanbian a century ago.²

¹ On the basis of “The Ego and the Id” and “Melancholia and Mourning” by Freud, Butler articulates melancholia as “unfinished process of grieving” (Butler 1997). Whereas mourning is an attempt to break from the lost one, melancholia is to refuse to let the lost one go--thus, the lost object continues to haunt and inhabit the ego as a part of the identification process. The lost one is preserved and co-existent with the ego (Butler 1997).

² Yael Navaro-Yashin, in an ethnography of the war-scarred borderland of Cyprus, argues that “affect is a charge that has a part to play in the sociality of the human beings who inhabit a space”(20). Here, affect is not only a means for inter-subjective connectivity, but also the channel that mediates between subject and things/environment. She focuses on the particular affect discharged by objects and environment, particularly ruins and other artifacts of war (Navaro-Yashin 2012). The Tumen River certainly “discharges affect,” running as it does between North Korea and China as a geographical, natural, and political border that vividly evokes the migration history of the Koreans who crossed it into Yanbian a century ago.

Although my ethnography is attuned to the structure of feeling through a lens of borderland and melancholia, this chapter, however, aims to shed different light from recent migration discussions that highlight ambiguous belonging or unhomeliness. Again and again, they were not given to expressions of ambiguous belonging, such as “*I am neither here nor there.*” Rather, Korean Chinese members of the Communist Party insisted on their strong attachment to China and socialism. My argument is that the *unambiguous* belonging is a political product that Korean Chinese had to develop in order to survive the political turmoil of modern China. As indicated by Mr. Kim Chul’s obsessive quest to obtain assurances from me, associations with Korea or Koreans often have troubled Korean Chinese, not only during the Cultural Revolution, but also after economic reform, and even now. Ambiguous belonging has been forbidden by the state of China; Korean Chinese were encouraged to foreground their political and patriotic affiliations with China. It is part of the vigilance thrust upon them as a consequence of living in an ethnic borderland of China.

Throughout my fieldwork, the frequent encounter with such vigilance on the part of Korean Chinese, along with an insistence on unambiguous belonging, constantly piqued my curiosity. It is the tight belonging to China that is in stark contrast to the recent migration studies with a focus on “between and betwixt.” What constitutes the unambiguous belonging underneath the strong affiliation with China and socialism? How can Korean Chinese guardedness coexist with the rampant desire for and relentless practice of transnational migration to South Korea? How do Korean Chinese resolve the self-contradictory attitude between China and Korea, socialism and capitalism, in the midst of the *Korean Wind*? Where does the contradiction stem from and move toward? Answering these questions, in the next

section, I stage the first encounter with the long forbidden homeland, South Korea, in order to demonstrate the anxiety woven through the daily vigilance in the wake of the *Korean Wind*.

5.1.2 Fears for the Homeland

I have laid out the body of recent literature portrays diasporic people as melancholic subjects in that they are yearning home/land, living with a feeling of loss—they could not let the lost one go. Yet, to Korean Chinese, in particular, those who underwent the Cultural Revolution, the homelands—North and South Korea—have been a source of fear and a place forbidden to get close to since any tie to these homelands would lead to the political persecution. Here, let me introduce the family story of Mr. Wu, a Korean Chinese writer in his late fifties, who I was closely and occasionally discussing on a broad range of topics of Korean Chinese culture, history, and literature along with other Korean Chinese writers. His story about the first encounter with the homeland offers a number of clues about the complicated feeling toward the homeland—a place for fear but also for excitement.

Unlike the majority of Yanbian Korean Chinese, whose families moved from the northern parts of Korea, Mr. Wu's family moved from the southern portion of the Korean peninsula under Japanese imperialism. Mr. Wu's father came to China as a young child with his parents and siblings in search of a better life. When the family settled in China, they thought the migration was temporary, and planned eventually to go back to their hometown after making enough money in China. After Japan was defeated in World War II and colonial *Chosun* was liberated from Japan in 1945, Mr. Wu's aunt—his father's younger sister—did return to Korea with her husband and children. Mr. Wu's grandparents also returned eventually. But Mr. Wu's father suddenly fell ill, and could not make the long trip home. While his return was delayed, political convulsions spread across and beyond China; the People's Republic of China was

established in 1949 and land redistribution was completed. Those who did not return to Korea right after the liberation from Japan started planning to stay in China. Most importantly, Korean Chinese farmers were granted farming land as part of the land reforms. They did not have to move constantly from one plot of land to another as floating, itinerant farmers any longer. Then, when the Korean War broke out in 1950, Korean Chinese, including Mr. Wu's father, had to defer their return anyway—with no way of knowing when that might change.

Mr. Wu's father became a teacher in a Korean Chinese high school. His wife, Wu's mother, worked as an accountant in a pulp factory in Yanbian. But as the Cultural Revolution started, their stable family life was threatened, as the Wu family background—both parents coming from South Korea—aroused suspicions. The father's occupation as a high school teacher was also used as an excuse to falsely accuse him of being an “intellectual” who served capitalism. The double accusation—South Korean spy and intellectual—seriously troubled the family. Mr. Wu's father was sent to the countryside (to transform himself from an elite to a commoner by working with farmers). Mr. Wu and his siblings were persecuted and harassed as “spy's babies.” The bullying and stigma were unbearable for young Mr. Wu. While his father was forced to be away for years, his family—his mother, two brothers and two sisters—were scattered to several relatives' houses because Mr. Wu's mother could not afford to feed four children by herself without the father's support. Even after the Cultural Revolution ended, the accusation left a deep scar in Mr. Wu's family. His father was too traumatized to initiate the search for his family back in South Korea—Mr. Wu's grandparents and aunt. Although Mr. Wu was aware of his father's desperation to know whether his aunt was still alive in Korea, he could

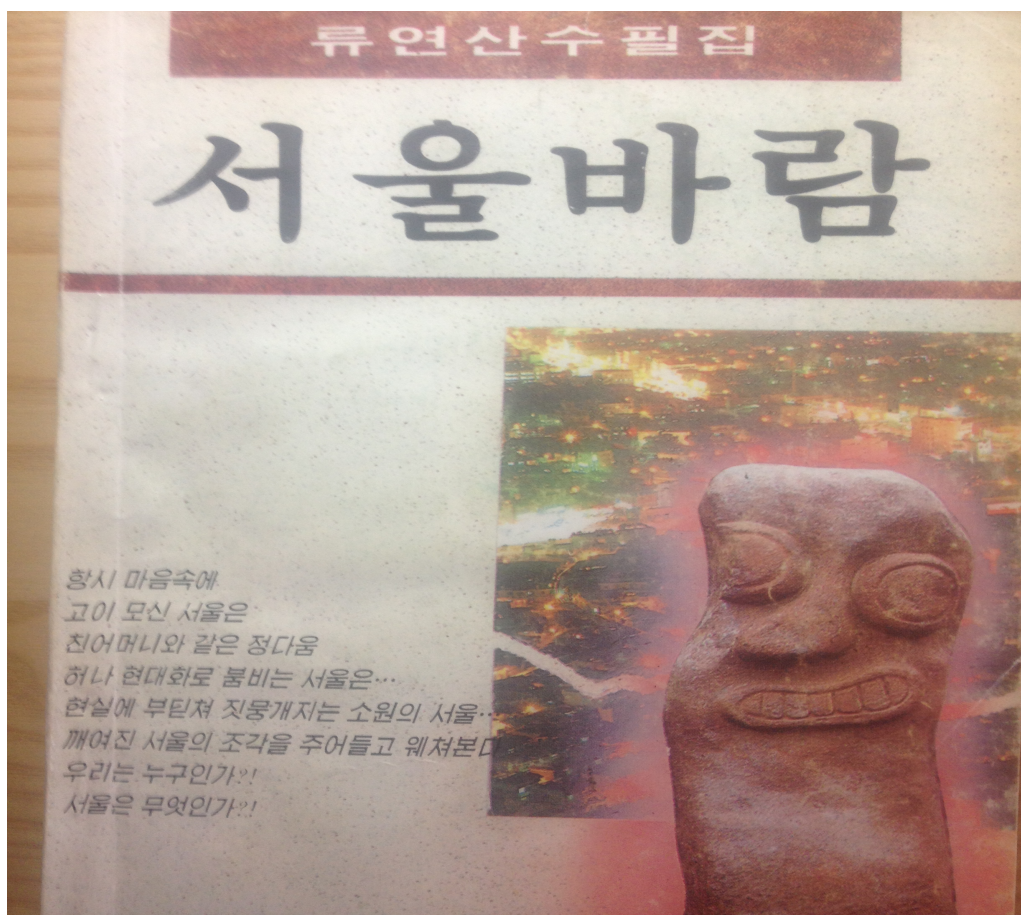


Photo 10. Ryu Yeonsan's Essay, *Seoul Wind*, dealing with the first counter with the forbidden homeland (1996)

not even try to investigate the aunt's status and whereabouts due to the possibility of another persecution. The story of the family's connection to South Korea had to remain an unspoken secret. In Yanbian, the victimhood of Mr. Wu's family was not at all exceptional. Any tie, not only to South Korea but also to North Korea, was covered up and left neglected until the early 1990s. The collective silence regarding family ties to the two Koreas haunted Korean Chinese for decades.

Things gradually changed as the Seoul Asian Games (1986) and Olympics (1988) took place and some initial contacts between South Korea and Korean Chinese occurred; the 1980s

needs a special attention as a crucial turning point for Korean Chinese to re-encounter with two Koreas. I collected multiple testimonies, not only from urbanites working for the government, but also from farmers in the countryside, that from the mid-1980s, many Korean Chinese started secretly listening to Korean radio programs whose signals could be picked up in China. The activity was still so risky that they often listened under the blankets at night without telling anybody. It was an extremely novel and exciting experience to get to know the long-forbidden Korea through voices speaking in the Seoul accent, which was familiar as well as unfamiliar to Korean Chinese. Mr. Kim Chul remembered secretly listening to Korean radio programs: “Whenever I heard them, I heard my heart pumping fast because I feared getting caught by the police. I knew I was doing what I was not supposed to do. But I could not stop. It was so fun and exciting. The stories and Korean songs were tuned to our emotions—we were the same ethnic people.”

Another reason that Korean radio became an emotional touchstone was a program called *Longing Face, Missing Voice* (*bogosipen olgul, guriun moksori*), which was about searches for family lost during the Korean War. The show was broadcast not only in Korea, but also in other countries. Ordinary people sent their stories to the program, hoping to get their search publicized so that lost family members might hear it and get in touch. But after decades of separation, memories grew cloudy, and the descriptions of lost relatives could be very vague. Still, sometimes Korean Chinese listening to the program in China noticed possible fits with friends or acquaintances, and told them about it. It was very rare, but occasionally, reconnections succeeded.

Some Korean Chinese started looking for their lost families on their own, exchanging letters with people in Korea. Most of these searches were undertaken in secret, and yet the

excitement of discovery was sometimes surreptitiously shared. Mr. Wu heard many such stories at the time. Since most Koreans and Korean Chinese did not know the exact addresses of relatives in the other country due to multiple moves, life changes, and societal transformations in China and Korea over four decades, letters were often returned undelivered. When they did get through, the letters did not reach the right person immediately, instead being passed from person to person, from house to house until finally the intended recipient was found. In the mid to the late 1980s, a few Korean Chinese who travelled to Korea on public business delivered and matched stories between people looking for their families in China and Korea. Since many searches were based on ambiguous and random rumors that had been circulated from mouth to mouth, actual reconnections seldom occurred. But the newly available means of communication—the radio program and increasing correspondence—did enable some to find and reunite with their lost families.³ As Mr. Liu—who was one of the fortunate ones who reconnected with relatives in South Korea during the 1980s—wrote in his book, *Seoul Wind*, Korean relatives began inviting their newly-rediscovered Korean Chinese families to Korea, paying the full travel costs, mostly because Korean Chinese could not afford to go otherwise. To make good on these invitations, Korean Chinese had to detour via Hong Kong to get to Korea due to the fact that there was no direct flight between China and South Korea at that time.

In 1985 Mr. Wu's father started writing letters to his sister in Korea, as many Korean Chinese were secretly attempting at the time. At first there was no reply. Mr. Wu's family hoped for a letter from the aunt, but nobody could openly express their hope—it was implicitly

³ The latecomers—those who moved from South Korea and lived in Heilongjiang and Jilin—were the ones who initiated the efforts to reunite, as they were more likely to have connections to South Korea. Thus, Korean Chinese from South Korea (*namdogi*) experienced the encounter with South Korea earlier than Yanbian Korean Chinese whose families had moved from North Korea (*bukdogi*).

forbidden to talk about it, even within the family. Finally in 1986, more than a year later, a letter arrived from the aunt in Korea, the one who had been separated from Mr. Wu's father for forty years. Mr. Wu described the moment with vivid excitement:

In fact, it seemed that the letter had been passed from wrong address to wrong address. When the letter finally reached our house, it was very much tattered. We did not tell my father about the letter at first. It was because at that time, he had a heart problem and high blood pressure from the physical and psychological trauma he suffered during the Cultural Revolution. We thought he would pass out if we told him about the letter. I was the one who opened it. I remember my hands were shaking and my heart was pounding. All my family were there together when the letter was opened. I read it to our family. Sadly, one of the things we learned was that our grandparents had passed away.

After Mr. Wu's father knew about the letter, he cried over the death of his parents, but also over the excitement that he would meet his living sister in forty years. His father was antsy and kept asking, nervously, "Do we have to go or do they have to come? Will they invite us or will we invite them?" After exchanging several letters, the separated siblings finally reunited in 1988 as Mr. Wu's aunt and her family visited China via Hong Kong. Next year, Wu's family visited Korea. The mutual visits have been ritualized annually or biannually. Mr. Wu said that it was hard to find the proper words to express the feeling of the moment. "We were deeply anxious and fearful about meeting our family in South Korea. My father's long, secret dream had been fulfilled." Excitement about reunited Korean Chinese/Korean families spread all across Northeast China around that time. "Korean guests" and "Korean Chinese guests" were welcomed both in China and Korea. Mr. Wu said, "It was just thrilling for the *same* Korean ethnic people to meet each other after such a long, desperate separation, after our harsh, traumatic history. We share the same blood. How great it was!"

Whenever I interviewed Korean Chinese people about their first encounter with the homeland, I could not help myself from having tears in my eyes—the stories were so

compelling and emotional. These narratives all followed similar story lines, from the search to the actual encounter, and all of them placed a great deal of emphasis on the concepts of common ethnicity, “the same blood.” Despite the excitement to be reunite with “the same blood,” however, the long-separated family reunification have turned out to be an occasion for Korean Chinese to *reassure* the discomfort with the homeland and Korean people—even after thirty year of the Cultural Revolution. The presumed reasons vary, supposed by Korean Chinese; “Koreans have lived under capitalism whereas we (Korean Chinese) are socialist subjects,” “Koreans have a *work-work* oriented life whereas we are still supported by the state of China.” In what way have Korean Chinese, who now live at a different moment from the Cultural Revolution (the harsh socialist revolution), readjusted their relationship to the homeland, in the midst of the *Korean Wind*, the very economic drive that dominates the everyday life of Yanbian? How do Korean Chinese those who had to repress the ambiguous and in-between-belonging between China and Korea accept the new flow of migration? In the next section, I chart the constant attempt for Korean Chinese party members to redefine and re-characterize their ethnicity along with and in contrast to the *Korean Wind* without simply suppressing their in-between ethnic identity—overcoming the fear.

5.2 Redefining Ethnicity

On a freezing day in November 2009, I attended an academic meeting in the Northeastern Chinese city of Jilin, organized by the Korean Chinese literary magazine *Doraji*. The topic was the future of Korean Chinese identity in the face of rapid economic and social change, most importantly the *Korean Wind*. The organizer invited renowned Korean Chinese literary scholars, high-ranking Communist Party members, and rising young novelists from all over China. The meeting, conducted in the Korean language, mainly concerned the special

characteristics of Korean Chinese ethnic culture as distinctive from Han Chinese culture as well as North and South Korea. The participants debated whether and in what ways the culture of Korean Chinese should be considered unique and what kinds of efforts Korean Chinese should make to create or maintain cultural uniqueness under the policy of ethnic harmony pursued by the Chinese Communist Party. What intrigued me about this day-long conversation was not only how the Korean Chinese participants highlighted their ideas of “should-be” culture (how the future of Korean Chinese literary culture should be), but also how the participants were sharply divided into two groups. One group advocated the idea that the cultural uniqueness of Korean Chinese stemmed from the fact that Korean Chinese are a border crossing ethnic group, articulating two different cultures—Chinese and Korean. The other group insisted that Korean Chinese culture has been maintained through the special protection of the Chinese government, and thus is part and parcel of China. The fierce debate spilled out into the breaks between sessions, but I also observed cold feet, a reluctance to go too far. What engendered the identity debate and what was the role of the border in this divided politics? And why did it occur *now*? In contrast to being fearful about ethnic talk—as I elaborated in the previous section, this conference displays the growing contention and emergence of “ethnic talk” generated by Korean Chinese.

Attempts to view Korean Chinese as a borderland ethnicity are not uncommon in Korean Chinese newspapers, magazines, and blogs. Much of the debate centered on vernacular theories, widely circulated in Korean Chinese society, that attempt to explain the in-between identity of Korean Chinese. The first is known as the “daughter-in-law” theory (*myunrilon* in Korean). It was coined by a famous Korean Chinese literary intellectual, Cheong Panryong, who viewed the situation of Korean Chinese as parallel to that of a newlywed woman.

According to the assumptions of Confucian gender patriarchy, the daughter-in-law (Korean Chinese) must obey the rule of the husband's family (China) and make a special effort to become a full family member. A common criticism of this theory is that it portrays Korean Chinese as a people without agency, mere subjects of the Chinese state. Another theory relies on the metaphor of "the apple-pear graft." This is derived from an ethnic tale about a farmer, newly arrived in China from North Korea, who decided to graft the Korean apple onto the Chinese pear. The graft turned out to be a great success, creating a new, delicious fruit, the "apple-pear," which combines the tastes of both its parent fruits. The fruit has become a popular symbol representing the doubleness of Korean Chinese, who have in effect grafted Korean culture upon that of China, as we have seen in the discussion of doubleness, hybridity and borderlands.

Yet, alongside these two metaphors that emphasize the dual characteristics of Korean Chinese culture runs another argument: that Korean Chinese should be considered neither as a diasporic group nor as an ethnic minority group. This position insists that Korean Chinese are "100 percent Korean Chinese" as a definite civic member and ethnic minority of China, not migrants caught between China and Korea (Huang 2007). The first two theories assume border-ness as an essential part of Korean Chinese identity, whereas the last theory de-emphasizes and unmarks border-ness as an ethnic characteristic. What, then, constitutes the 100 percent? Why do some celebrate the unique in-between-ness of Korean Chinese as a border crossing ethnicity while others are reluctant to accept the idea? In what way do or do not this conversation relate to the discussion on diaspora—borderland and melancholic subjects—that I introduced in the previous section? Most importantly, in what respect is the border-ness of Korean Chinese different from that of other ethnic minorities in China's border zones and territorial margins?

To answer these questions, anthropological inquiries regarding ethnicity, minority, and migration which provide useful insights. Minorities are discussed as an ongoing product of “human artifice,” as people who are not born equal, but may become equal as members of a group (Bhabha 1994). Bhabha elaborates on the production of minorities as parallel to the production of stereotypes in a colonial context, the stereotype being a particular, fixed form of the colonial subject that drives and maintains colonial relations (Bhabha 1994: 112), making the other recognizable in a system of knowledge about the Orient constituted through continuous investment (Said 1979). Ethnicity, denoting both the peoplehood as well as the otherness of particular groups (Sollors 1995), has been a major factor in producing and fixing *others* within and beyond the nation state. Despite the flexibility and vagueness ingrained in the concept, ethnicity tends to be confined to “named human populations with shared ancestry myth, histories, and cultures, having an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity” (Smith 2001). Also, ethnicity can function as both a term of exclusion, a clear boundary marker keeping out certain groups, *and* as a term of inclusion aimed at *removing* boundaries and discrimination against othered groups (Chow 2002:25). Nonetheless, the ambiguous definitions commonly presume ethnicity to define groups that share time and space and to mark distinctions between outsider and insider. But counter to the perspective that views “ethnicity as a group” runs another argument about “ethnicity without groups” (Brubaker 2004). Brubaker suggests that ethnicity does not merely mark out specific entities or groups, but should rather be understood as defining “group-ness” and “event” in “relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated terms” (2004:11). Ethnicity thus emerges not as an attribute of group identity bounded by biology, culture, and geography, but as a process of ethnicization, forming and reforming the “human artifice” that maintains practical inequality (Wallerstein 1991).

The inequality entailed in the process of ethnicization is especially helpful for me in analyzing the political implication concerning the 56 ethno-national groups (*minzu*) scattered throughout China, a discourse informed by the theme of the nation as “a plural singularity” (Mullaney 2011). Anthropologists on Chinese ethnic minorities have emphasized the state’s role in constructing “ethnic culture” and “ethnic identity” as a consequence of the “backwardness” of remote zones (Dautcher 2009; Harrell 1995; Litzinger 2000; Mueggler 2001). Characterizing the Chinese politics of ethnic minority as a civilizing project, Harrell argues that the Han Chinese-dominated central government has engendered an ethnic periphery with a “stigmatized identity” as backward, uncivilized, dirty, and stupid (Harrell 1995). The arbitrary and simplified category of ethnicity devised by the Communist state as a consequence of the ethnic classification project conducted in the 1950s ignores the complicated histories, cultures, and politics of ethnic groups and assimilates them under the rubric of “One China” (Harrell 1995; Friedman 2006; Litzinger 2000).

Drawing on critiques of the centralized governance of ethnic minorities, however, current scholarship attempts to dismantle the unitary notion of Han-dominated “Chinese culture,” creating a new understanding of “marginality” (Litzinger 2000; Schein 2000) in terms of location, politics, and subjectivity. Ethnic minorities are seen neither as outsiders with respect to a coherent Chinese culture, nor as necessarily subject to assimilation by Han Chinese (Mueggler 2001: 19). Ethnic minorities come into play as active agents that negotiate with the state, recover forgotten culture, and re-define their own subjectivity (Litzinger 1998). In this new era, anthropologists pay attention to the concept of identity as contingent production at specific historical and institutional sites (Hall 1996a), “writing against the culture (culture as a fixed and frozen entity)” (Abu-Lughod 1997), and thinking of culture as “cultural production,”

marked by the fixing of traits and the manufacturing of traditions to support and/or subvert power relations (Schein 2000: 13).

Cultural production, however, never remains purely cultural, but is rather deeply concerned with politics, especially when it comes to the issue of ethnic minorities in China. Since the 1980s, the Chinese government has begun, in the wake of economic reforms, to support the revival of the traditional cultures and rituals of ethnic minorities, recognizing cultural differences that were repressed during the Cultural Revolution. As part of a modernizing project, the state's past mistakes have been tacitly admitted, and forgotten or repressed traditions and cultures of ethnic minorities have been recovered and recuperated through "memory work" (Litzinger 1998). The recognition of ethnic others by the Chinese Communist Party has given rise to more openly displayed cultural differences and an appreciation of the uniqueness of each ethnic group. Deployed in the form of colorful attire or song and dance, cultural difference becomes the subject of ethnic tourism, and Chinese ethnic harmony is exhibited under the ideal theme of "plural singularity." Chinese ethnic minorities now take their place in the pageant of legitimate and official others that help constitute the long and grand history of China.

I take "the revival of the ethnic" (Litzinger 1998) as a key analytical turning point in understanding the new dynamics between ethnic others and the Chinese Communist Party, one that attempts to go beyond the simple dichotomy between domination and resistance, the center and periphery (Harrell 1995), or internal orientalism (Schein 2000). Despite the constant and strong presence of the state in the governance of ethnic minorities, ethnic others come to show up in the public and political domain as active agents who engage in deploying and

promoting would-be-proper ethnic elements and politics in order to define and redefine who they are and what they would like to be.

While my work sheds light on the politics of revival of the ethnic under the regime of economic reform, my interest is not in the way that Korean Chinese, as ethnic others, have negotiated with the state and performed the cultural politics of reviving a forgotten ethnic identity. Rather, I highlight the gradual shift in the ways that Korean Chinese invoke their ethnic in-between-ness in the context of economic reform (the *Korean Wind*). In addition, I unravel how they have endeavored to deploy and promote the assembled ethnic characteristics and associated ethnic values in an era that requires Chinese to capitalize on whatever values individuals can mobilize (see chapter 1). As in the debate that unfolded in the conference scene, introduced at the beginning of the section, many Korean Chinese end up discovering the specific uniqueness of Korean Chinese culture (*minzu tese*) in its border-ness or “unhomeliness,” (Bhabah 1994). Instead of simply refusing the forbidden tie to Korea, this border identity expressed in such terms—“daughter-in-law” and “apple-pear”—reflects the rooted ontological contradictions of a people who have lived as the most recent settler migrant ethnic group in China. At the same time, Korean Chinese overtly claim a strong loyalty to the state of China as full-fledged members of the Chinese state, by coining a term “100 percent Korean Chinese.” This is a stark contrast to other ethnic minorities who have lived in China for centuries and who have built strong claims to territory, religion, and political autonomy—for the sake of their cultural and political autonomy, as recently seen in the heated Tibet and Xinjiang ethnic conflicts.

My analysis is centered on the *seemingly unambiguous* politics built on this split and vigilant attitude; Korean Chinese have appropriated their border-ness as an economic means to

facilitate transnational migration to South Korea while displaying the political affiliation to the state of China as an ethnic survival tactic. Namely, the border identity is repressed at certain points but revived at others. Some people celebrate it while some others obscure or ignore it. Overall, Korean Chinese expressions of border-ness turn out to be volatile, hinging on extremely individual political and economic choices. The ongoing debate might be an attempt for Korean Chinese themselves to answer what it means to be Korean Chinese. In what follows, I pursue these questions, tracing the long trajectory of Korean Chinese border crossing over the last century. To do that, my ethnographic analysis relies on the narratives of five elderly Korean Chinese Communist Party members and their border-related memories; the repressed and revived ethnic memory.

5.3 Korean Chinese Vigilance

5.3.1 Embodied Border Crossing

Regardless of the repressed in-between ethnicity, the theme of border crossing is deeply ingrained in the oral histories that I have heard and the Korean Chinese history books that I have collected, as I discussed in chapter 1.⁴ Usually, the stories reflect multiple experiences of moving, not only border crossing from the Korean peninsula to China, but also from Yanbian to other parts of Northeast China or beyond. Here, let me go back to the scene of the lunch meeting that Mr. Kim Chul organized, asking for the reassurance that I would keep things to myself. In fact, after the first meeting, I had four other meetings with the same party members over lunch, drinks, and picnics, chances for me to develop deeper understandings of border crossings and stories of

⁴ <Common Sense of Korean Chinese History>, <The Traces of Korean Chinese>, <One Hundred Years of Korean Chinese History>, <Jilin Korean Chinese>, and multiple collections of local histories written by local historians (Yanji, Longjing, Tumen, Hualong, Wangqing, Hunchun). All were written in Korean, and published in Yanbian.

mobility. Of the five members, Mr. Moon's story is unique and exemplary. Now in his late seventies, he is a retired technician who used to work for the local government of Longjing. Mr. Moon's parents left impoverished lives under Japanese imperialism in Kyungsang province, South Korea, for a better life in Jilin province, Manchuria, in the 1920s. Mr. Moon was born in 1933—two years after the Japanese had occupied Manchuria. While growing up, the young Mr. Moon had been tired of endless poverty and farm work. One day when he was a teenager, the Chinese military called for volunteers to participate in the Korean War in 1950, fighting on the side of North Korea. He knew he was too young to go to war. But he was not to be denied a place in the army. During the Korean War, his duties did not expose him to much danger: he was a courier, from one unit to another and did simple translation work from Chinese to Korean, or the other way around, in order to help the North Korean and Chinese armies communicate with each other. The Korean War, which was disastrous to both Koreas, ended in 1953. After the war, some Korean Chinese soldiers remained in North Korea to aid in the reconstruction effort, while others returned to China. Mr. Moon decided to go back to his hometown in China because he had fallen ill and could not engage in hard physical labor.

There, he again had to face poverty and farm work, even after the successful socialist revolution and its programs of land redistribution and collectivization. As poverty peaked during the Great Leap Forward and three-year natural disaster of the late 1950s and early 1960s, “running away to North Korea” became the fashion among young Korean Chinese in Yanbian. Like many of his contemporaries, Mr. Moon decided to run to North Korea. He recalled the moment in an excited voice. “Every day, I heard about more and more young people who had disappeared, secretly gone to North Korea. I made a plan with several friends of mine in town to go, since all of us were too sick to farm. I just ran away with my friends without telling my

parents. Back then, North Korea was considered much better off than China. I was very brave without thinking much of the future.” His life in North Korea, however, was not even close to what he had imagined. Mr. Moon was full of dreams of becoming a factory worker in the more industrially developed North Korea, since he hated being a farmer in the cold weather of Northeast China. But working at a factory in North Korea was completely different from his dreams. The work environment was rigid and the supervision was tight everywhere. There were no friends or networks that he could rely on for help. “I was lonely and isolated, as if I lived in a completely foreign country.” The unpleasant conditions made Mr. Moon run away back to Jilin province, his home in China.

On returning from North Korea, the savvy Mr. Moon easily got a job as a technician for the local government. During the Cultural Revolution he was able to evade the persecution on former “runaways” to North Korea. He was extra careful to keep his runaway experiences to himself. Later in the 1980s—the era of economic reform—Mr. Moon realized that his life was stable and better off because of the technical skills he possessed. He took frequent trips to larger cities when new machines needed importing or introducing to Yanbian. These trips made him aware of new trends earlier than other Korean Chinese of Yanbian, which was considered a backward ethnic border territory. “I opened my eyes earlier than other Korean Chinese because I met Han Chinese in Beijing and Shenyang, and learned new knowledge from them and delivered it to Yanbian,” he said.

After China and South Korea normalized diplomatic relations in 1992, Mr. Moon’s life faced a dramatic change when he reconnected with a long-lost uncle living in South Korea. Unlike the majority of Korean Chinese in Yanbian, whose kinship ties are to the current North Korea, Mr. Moon, whose parents moved from the southern part of the current South Korea, had

an easier time visiting his Korean relatives because of the family reunion program initiated by the Korean government. Making contact with his uncle allowed Mr. Moon to be invited to Korea, where he eventually overstayed his visa while working as a technician in a factory. He recalled his encounter with South Korea as follows:

In China, we learned that South Korea was a poor capitalist enemy and a baby of the American empire. It was right after the Seoul Olympics when I first visited South Korea. It was much more developed and cleaner than I had imagined. I looked so small and shabby compared to South Koreans, who were wearing cleaner and more fashionable clothes. Working as a technician, I made much better money than in China. But I did not tell Koreans that I was from China. Because I speak the Kyungsang dialect, Koreans did not notice that I was Korean Chinese. I knew that I would have been discriminated against or looked down upon if I had told them I had come from poor socialist China.

He deeply feared the consequences if his South Korean friends learned that he had fought for North Korea in the war. Aware of the strong anti-communist sentiment in South Korea, Mr. Moon tried very hard to avoid saying anything about his war-related experiences. After overstaying in South Korea for five years, Mr. Moon had made enough money to buy a new apartment in Yanbian. He felt too old to keep doing physical labor in Korea, and returned to China in 1998.

He told me he was happy, and proud of where he was. “I have a spacious house in the city of Longjing. I am paid a pension by the government. My son and daughter-in-law working in Korea send some money once in a while. My granddaughter goes to college in Korea. I have friends to drink with and I have a wife. My life is good in general.” He was proud of his son and daughter-in-law, whose hard work was getting recognition from their Korean bosses. “Now I’m just waiting for all our family to live back together in Yanbian again. I do not think that day will come, though.” After hearing Mr. Moon’s long personal history, the other old party members said with surprise, “We didn’t know you’d been around the world that much.” Mr. Moon

answered, “Since I didn’t want to arouse suspicions, I didn’t want to talk about my story—I used to work in South Korea, my parents were from South Korea, and so forth.”⁵

Let me pause from his long border-crossing story for a while. Here, I was especially fascinated, indeed stunned, by the long silence that Mr. Moon has kept regarding his multiple border crossing experiences—from South Korea to China, from China to North Korea and back to China, and again, from China to South Korea, and back to China. Melancholia and “unhomeliness” have always been a part of Mr. Moon’s identification process through his multiple border crossings. And yet, his border-ness is not simply constituted by these experiences (his actual migrations) and multiply ambiguous belongings to China and the two Koreas. Here, I highlight his repetitions and vigilant attitude while border crossing across countries and regimes according to each particular context in which he was situated. During the Cultural Revolution, he had to hide his experience as a runaway to North Korea. While working in South Korea, he was afraid of being scapegoated by the rampant Cold War mentality there, and acted as if he were a Korean who had never been to China, relying on his southern regional Korean accent. Back in China, he did not overtly trumpet his moneymaking sojourn in Korea, “just in case” it would cause trouble. He intended to make his in-between-ethnicity at once foregrounded and obscured, revived and suppressed.

But at the same time, Mr. Moon openly and proudly talked about his children’s choice to work in Korea (his son working in construction and his daughter-in-law serving as a waitress, jobs typical of Korean Chinese in Korea). He meant to depict their transnational labor migration

⁵ In fact, there are two groups of Korean Chinese, depending on whether their ancestors originated from North Korea or South Korea. Since Yanbian borders on North Korea, many Koreans moved from the northern part of Korea to Yanbian from the late 19th century. Later, under the Japanese occupation, many farmers moved from southern Korea to of the northern parts of Manchuria, where fewer previous Korean migrants occupied the farmlands. Thus, there is a rough regional division; Yanbian is to Korean migrants from northern Korea as the northern portions of Northeast China (Jilin and Heilongjiang) are to migrants from southern Korea (Lim 2000).

as a mere economic choice and an essential investment for a better future. *Their* border crossing emerges as an economic and apolitical gesture whereas *his* experiences carry a political implication that could burden and impact his life as a Communist Party member who belong to the generation of the Cultural Revolution. How can we understand Mr. Moon's vigilant attitude and seemingly contradictory reaction to border crossing? What is the principle or intention behind this wariness about border crossing? In the next section, I articulate how Korean Chinese party members use forms of socialist political claims about who they are and what they should be like, both highlighting and obscuring their bordered and vigilant ethnicity.

5.3.2 Becoming Korean "*Chinese*"

Mr. Kim Chul, who posed multiple reassurances at the beginning of the chapter, is a vibrant storyteller, good at spicing his narratives with emotional expressions and witty jokes. He is a member of the Association of Korean Chinese Writers and he has published several works of fiction and essays in the literary journal of Korean Chinese. Like his fictions and essays, his family stories are full of border crossing experiences. The history of his family follows the same general narrative contours that are so common in Korean Chinese history. His grandparents crossed the Tumen River from the northern part of the Korean peninsula in the late 19th century, and farmed in a border town of Yanbian. At that time, the border seemed to be more porous. People came and went back and forth between Chosun and China. His grandparents were traditional farmers who reclaimed the barren land of Yanbian. Like his parents and grandparents, Mr. Kim worked on the family farm as a child, but ran away from home to a nearby city because he badly wanted to go to school there. He went to middle school three years later than his friends of the same age. After graduating from middle school, he returned home to support his parents' lives as poor peasants and farmers. Once again he escaped farming, this time seizing a chance to go into the

Chinese military, which was considered a life-changing opportunity in China in the 1950s. His military career consisted largely of travelling, learning, and studying—including the Chinese language, which he did not speak fluently before he joined the military, having grown up in a purely Korean Chinese town. The military was deemed a prestigious and promising profession that would secure a stable future in China. But Mr. Kim realized that he would soon reach a limit for further promotion because of his Korean Chinese identity—as an ethnic minority he was marginalized in the Han Chinese-centered military. “I could not stand the *Han cave* [Korean Chinese use this term to mean any Han Chinese-dominated zone] anymore and decided to come back home. However good the job I did, all benefits accrued to the Han Chinese, who were the majority in the military and helped each other. Nobody dared to discriminate *openly* against me. But I felt the limits. It was still discrimination, just an unspoken kind.”

After returning home again, he got a special chance to enter college as a former soldier in 1966. During the Cultural Revolution he participated as a Red Guard, and became a Communist Party member. His political engagement and military background got him assigned to a good position in the local government of Longjing, a city in Yanbian where the majority of residents are Korean Chinese. Whenever I heard this part of his story from Mr. Kim, it was clear that he wanted to demonstrate his overt pride in being a party member, and his faith in the Communist Party. As he told me, “We Korean Chinese have not lost our language and culture even after living in China for a century, all thanks to the greatness of the ethnic minority policy of the Chinese Communist Party. Thanks to this good policy, you and I can speak and become friends.”

Despite the confident sense of belonging that Mr. Kim presented as a proud and faithful Chinese national and Communist Party loyalist, the issue of belonging has historically been a topic of contention amongst most Korean Chinese, as I repeated. Here, let me take readers back

to the lunch scene where I discussed the question of belonging with the Communist Party members. In contrast to Mr. Moon, whose ancestors moved from the southern part of the Korean peninsula (*namdoqi*, meaning to come from the south in Korean), a majority of Yanbian Korean Chinese, such as Mr. Kim's grandparents, did cross the Tumen River from northern Korea (*bukdoqi*, coming from the north in Korean). These *bukdoqi* expressed a vague emotional attachment to North Korea, and often recalled the exact name and location of the "hometown" their parents had left seventy or eighty years before. I asked these elderly men how they could possibly remember these things. They answered that they had been required to use their northern Korean addresses in official documents and situations, such as elementary school. The habit continued until 1957—which was the year that the Communist Party started to emphasize the idea of China as "home country" of Korean Chinese—not Korea, but China. Before the establishment of the new Chinese state in 1949, ethnic Koreans were ambiguously considered Korean residents living in China, without a specific national citizenship. From 1957 on, however, the new ideological education forced Korean Chinese to define China as their home country. Now Korean Chinese had to obey only one country—Communist China—thereby becoming Korean "Chinese," not "Korean" Chinese—that is, Chinese nationals with Korean ethnicity. The idea of "home country" was reinforced in stricter ways during the Cultural Revolution. Any tie to a foreign country could lead one to be accused as a "spy."

During this period, many renowned Korean Chinese scientists and scholars defected to North Korea. It was not only because North Korea welcomed these people to the homeland, but also because Korean Chinese suffered random political persecution just on the basis of ethnicity. As ethnic others they were deemed to be potential spies for either North or South Korea. In the midst of political turmoil of these years, ties to South Korea—a capitalist enemy—were especially

used as critical evidence to justify political persecution as a capitalist. To most Korean Chinese who lived through the Cultural Revolution, South Korea was a source of fear of persecution and death. Either overt or exaggerated declarations of “anti-capitalist” or “anti-South Korean” sentiments were often the way to protect oneself from arbitrary repression. Due to their in-between-ethnic background, most Korean Chinese maintained this particular structure of vigilant feeling, forged under the danger of “life and death” during the Cultural Revolution.

I carefully asked them to recall memories and experiences of the Cultural Revolution that required them to repress their border crossing identity and rather emphasize their full Chineseness. The old party members showed a bit of hesitation. They were not sure how to assess this political event and how to situate their relationship to South Korea and South Koreans, including me, even given the popularity of the *Korean Wind*. To end the awkward silence, I changed the subject, asking whether they had ever been to Korea. Out of five at the table, including Mr. Kim, three had been to Korea while two had not. Mr. An—who had previously worked in the Longjing police department—admired the cleanness and civil manner of Koreans in Seoul when he visited there. His son had been working in Korea for more than a decade and sent money back to China. After An spoke, Mr. Oh—a retired middle school teacher—proudly responded, “I heard that there is nothing to see in Korea. It is such a tiny country. Everybody is crazy about work-work. I have never been to Korea. And I don’t want to go, either. Look at the greatness of China—the economic achievement. The Communist Party is developing the welfare of the people. I would rather travel in China than go to Korea.” Mr. Kim argued with him a bit. “Mr. Oh, the greatness of the Chinese Communist Party is undeniable. But it is worth trying to go to Korea, at least once. However much we hate Koreans or South Korea, it is more developed than China in some parts. There is something we can learn from them. Also, aren’t we the same

ethnic people?” Mr. Lee—formerly the principal of a middle school in Longjing—kept silent through the discussion. I asked him whether there was a special reason for him not to visit Korea. He said, “I’ve had several opportunities to go there. My work unit organized a trip. It was in the early 1990s at a beginning stage of the *Korean Wind* (*Hankuk Baram*) and not so many people had been to Korea yet. I wanted to go. But I was worried. What if I were persecuted after I came back? I didn’t want to lose my position and political power at that time. So I decided never to go to Korea. I just watch Korean TV and read their newspapers.”

This conversation allowed me to realize that these party members have hesitated as well as repressed to answer questions of belonging or identity because the identity question is related to life and death. In addition, it inspired me to rethink the locus of the two Koreas (North and South) with Korean Chinese, especially South Korea, a country constructed and imagined as an “enemy homeland” throughout the Cold War. South Korea was once a source of fear because any minimal tie resulted in harsh persecution. These particular anxieties, structured through the Cold War and the Cultural Revolution, have inhibited Korean Chinese from developing any political discussion and engagement beyond the advocacy of socialism. Any sense of ethnic and/or kinship attachment to South Korea was forbidden for decades. Thirty years later, however, South Korea has re-emerged as a source of modernity and a land of opportunity for a half million Korean Chinese, who have persistently pursued the Korean Dream in search of a better future.

The contradiction is that the old fears have not fully disappeared, but persist in the memories, habits, and feelings of these aging party members. For the most part, they criticized Korea, portraying it as a disorganized, disordered, or too-democratic country, as opposed to China, which they saw as an organized, ordered, and legitimately authoritarian country. They also

stay mostly reluctant to visit Korea due to the emotional vestiges of Cold War politics. On the other hand, these party members' sons and daughters have been working in Korea—the previous enemy—and sending money back to China to support their families, including the officially anti-Korean party members themselves. In the next section, I further explore the ways in which these Korean Chinese party members situate their vigilant ethnicity in a setting of transnational migration. My focus is on the oscillation; they dismiss Korean ethnicity as a *political* term while at the same time, they are more accepting of Korean ethnicity as an *economic* term.

5.3.3 Seemingly Unambiguous

Let me go back to the confident and overt sense of belonging exhibited by Mr. Kim. Sometimes, Mr. Kim confused me by changing his logic and words in accordance with the circumstances. Whenever he introduced me to other party members, he told them, “This Korean lady wants to know what good Chinese policies have driven the quick economic development of China and how Korean Chinese enjoy benefits from the Communist Party.” In the presence of others Mr. Kim loudly ascribed Chinese economic development, or, more precisely, Yanbian’s development solely to the successful execution of economic policy by the Communist Party. However, when Mr. Kim was talking only with me in person, he emphasized the essential role of remittances sent from Korean Chinese migrant workers in Korea. The two versions of his attitude toward Yanbian’s development triggered my confusion.

We spent a great deal of time in sharing family and personal stories. His biography was another one full of mobility. I knew that his wife went to Seoul to work as a waitress in order to pay off the debt incurred by the purchase of their house. As a government officer, he could not make enough money to catch up to the new trend of purchasing of new apartments and obtaining expensive educations for his children and grandchildren. His wife’s trip to Korea was

essential, although he was sad and disheartened about letting her go to Korea. Mr. Kim also told me that both of his sons worked in Korea. He was proud of what he said was the high regard in which they were held by their Korean bosses. His younger son was still working in Korea when I knew Mr. Kim, and had made decent economic progress. But the older son, an undocumented worker, had been deported back to China. After his son returned, the son's wife—Mr. Kim's daughter-in-law—went to Korea herself so as to support the soaring cost of living and school tuition for their twin children. Overall, Mr. Kim's family has deeply relied on remittances from Korea.

Despite the important role of remittances in his family economy, Mr. Kim has never overtly approved of them, at least to me. "The reason I had to send my wife, sons, and daughter-in-law to Korea to make money is not because we are poor Korean Chinese, but because my family wants to have a bit better life in a faster time." I asked him if he has ever thought of going to Korea to make money. He responded, "No. I have never thought of going to Korea to make money myself because I have a good position in China and get good benefits and a pension as a well-positioned Communist Party member. If I go to Korea to make money, that would not look good. Also, I would have lost my benefits if I had quit before I retired. I need to be the one who keeps up our social position in China while other family members have gone to work." Instead of Mr. Kim going to Korea, his wife undertook the harsh burden of labor in Korea and contributing to the family's economic betterment. Also, he wanted to be the core binding force at home, where his wife and his children would eventually return.

On his own family's transnational migration, Mr. Kim's position remains constant—going to Korea is a mere economic activity. Since economic reform in China and, in particular, political normalization with South Korea in 1992, the revival of the border crossing ethnicity

amongst Korean Chinese has been actively and even aggressively promoted in conjunction with the boom in transnational migration. By his account, all of Mr. Kim's family members went to Korea through illegal brokers and stayed undocumented for years, whereas Mr. Kim remained politically stable and faithful to the state of China and the Communist Party in the midst of the rampant *Korean dream*. Not only Mr. Kim's relatives but also numerous Korean Chinese individuals and families have re-discovered and mobilized the specific value of ethnicity in the new era of border crossing. They have marketed themselves to Korean employers as cheap migrant labor that nevertheless speaks the same language, eats similar kinds of food, and shares certain cultural characteristics. The ethnic uniqueness of Korean Chinese (*minzu tese*) has been described as *almost Korean but not quite*—and this is the very competitive value that has enabled Korean Chinese workers to march into the Korean labor market.

I do not mean, however, to suggest that Korean Chinese have faced an especially sharp shift from the era of repressed ethnicity to that of revived ethnicity in the age of economic reform. Mr. Kim's narrative, rather, highlights the oscillation between repressed and revived ethnicity as seen in contradictory circumstances; Mr. Kim remained confident in and faithful to the communist state of China (obscuring Korean Chinese ethnicity) while his family members relied on and mobilized the ethnicity as a means to join the transnational migration in the name of economic advancement. I have argued that the repression and revival of ethnicity should be construed not as two separated moments, or as politically antithetical. They are, instead, a concocted effect deeply ingrained in everyday life as an implicit support mechanism for transnational migration between China and South Korea. Let me go back to the question raised at the meeting, *what really constitutes 100 percent Korean Chinese?* The partial answer might be vigilance and oscillation regarding their in-between-belonging despite the overt association with

the state of China. At the intersection of deep-rooted historical traumas with the *Korean Wind*, the ethnicity that was once forcefully hidden and repressed now appears and disappears, is foregrounded and obscured in conjunction with political context and economic opportunities.

5.4 Conclusion

Converging to and diverging from the discussion on borderland and melancholia, hybridity and unhomeliness, this chapter has pushed further my ethnographic observation of the development of a seemingly unambiguous Korean Chinese identity/ethnic politics at the intersection of post-Cold War circumstances and post-socialist politics. I focus on the vigilant attitude of the Korean Chinese party members who oscillate between China and Korea, socialism and capitalism, politics and economics, examining what lies beneath the seemingly unambiguous ethnic politics. I have argued that the *Korean Wind* has prompted Korean Chinese to redefine their ethnic subjectivity and re-characterize what it means to be *Korean “Chinese.”* I also suggest that the intensified unambiguous attitude is a political artifact that the Communist Party members have nurtured, living as an ethnic minority on the Chinese border alongside the two Koreas. Instead of dismissing the diasporic affect, such as border affect and melancholia (those who cannot let the lost one go), I have underscored Korean Chinese *had to* let the lost one (homeland or kinship tie) go as a way to survive political turmoil and random persecution in modern China. The suppressed trauma and the “loss” of ethnic/familial ties, however, remain preserved as a major part of the self-identification of Korean Chinese as a vigilant ethnicity; it is repressed as well as revived as a seemingly unambiguous politics.

To this final suggestion I add a concluding anecdote; my encounter with a Communist Party member, Mr. Pi, who kept his silence throughout the lunch meeting, which went for about four hours. When we left and walked to the bus stop together, Mr. Pi broke his silence. “It was

very nice to meet you,” he carefully said. “You are the first Korean—the first foreigner—I have talked to in my life. My father was a scientist who studied in the Soviet Union in the 1950s. He was accused of being a capitalist and killed during the Cultural Revolution. My brother, a scientist, too, was falsely persecuted as a spy for North Korea after my father died. Our family was completely torn apart. All of my siblings and my mother became impoverished. Although everybody is gone to South Korea nowadays, almost as if it is our real home, I could never dream of going there. Now I feel that I live in a better world since I’ve met and eaten with a Korean girl.”

Mr. Pi’s voice trembled as he spoke to me, the first Korean he had ever met in person. I was at loss, having tears in my eyes again. Also, I was truly deeply moved by the fact that he had approached me and confessed a traumatic family history. At the same time, his testimony felt uncanny to hear during a time when a half million Korean Chinese regularly travel back and forth between China and Korea—freely and frequently. Most of all, we live in an era when a majority of Korean Chinese households rely heavily on remittances sent from Korean Chinese working in South Korea. How can we make sense of the odd moment of socialism that these party members were situated in? The Cold War legacy still haunts the party members, who impose vigilance while at the same time a post-socialist China elevates the confidence and pride of being Chinese. The seemingly unambiguous politics that Korean Chinese party members posed has been complicated and exacerbated in the wake of the rise of China. Now, my focus moves on to Korean Chinese caught between two dreams: between the Korean dream and the Chinese dream.

Chapter 6. Between Two Dreams: From *Dagong* (Laborer) to *Laoban* (Entrepreneur)

I revisited Yanbian for follow-up research in July 2011. On my arrival, I found that Yanji had undergone remarkable changes in the year and a half since I had last been there. The city looked cleaner and more packed with high-rise buildings. Moreover, as I travelled by taxi from the airport (on the outskirts of Yanji) to downtown, I saw many ongoing construction projects: the paving of new roads, the extension of major thoroughfares, and renovations to the main bridge (called *Henanqiao*) that connects the southern and northern parts of the city. The ubiquitous construction, along with an obvious increase in private car ownership, prevented the smooth flow of traffic. Such changes were not entirely unexpected; many Korean Chinese migrants had recently told me, in their emails and phone conversations (while I was in the US), about their own confusion at the dramatic recent changes in Yanbian. They could not find the place where they used to live; the cost of living had skyrocketed; levels of consumption had risen to bewildering levels. The transformed Yanbian, bears witness to a new urban landscape, produced by Chinese economic growth mixed with remittance development (as I have laid out in previous chapters).

This chapter sets out to document the moment of the *Post-Korean Wind*, by catching the emerging hopes and frustrations, anxieties and regrets concealed behind the rosy scenes of economic development. My particular ethnographic focus is on the widely circulated reevaluation and rethinking of the gust of *Korean Wind* that has swept over individuals, families, and Yanbian society in general. Some migrants believe that they have achieved the Korean dream while some do not. Some are still pursuing the dream while others are done with that. Some missing their time in Korea while others loathed the memory, as captured in



Photo 11. Newly High Rising Buildings in Yanji. By June Hee Kwon (2011)



Photo 12. Traffic Jam in Yanji. By June Hee Kwon(2011)



Photo 13. The Road Under Construction in Yanji. By June Hee Kwon (2011)



Photo 14. The Coexistence of the Old Houses with the New Partments. By June Hee Kwon (2009)

the popular saying, “I would not even pee toward the Korea side.” Korean Chinese migrants do not celebrate the Korean dream as they did a decade ago. They have started critically evaluating and reflecting on what they have done, what they should (or should not) have done, and what they will do with respect to the *Korean Wind*, now and in the future.

A common notion has emerged from these narratives of re-evaluation—that those who did not go to Korea have become much better off than those who did. This widely spoken sentiment implies that mobility signifies *lack* whereas immobility is a marker of economic affluence and social stability.¹ The emerging discourse contains a cautionary element; it encourages Korean Chinese not to move any more, but to settle in China. Local newspapers and Korean Chinese blogs have advertised and celebrated the stories of those who have achieved great businesses successes without going to Korea. These “stay-at-home” entrepreneurs offer public lectures and attend social meetings to share their experiences and know-how. Particularly popular are the stories of those who have made a dramatic life change from rural farming to owning restaurants, karaoke bars, massage parlors, clothing stores, and so forth. The media does celebrate the clever use of skills acquired by migrants in Korea, where they worked as *dagong* (physical laborers). But the obvious message in this coverage is that Korean Chinese should *stop* working under Korean capital as *dagong*, as that does not have a promising future. They should instead become entrepreneurs and bosses themselves, and manage their own money, businesses, and futures. Through numerous classes and social gatherings, Yanbian’s new discourse of entrepreneurship channels ideas and methods of self-

¹ Postsocialist studies have examined the social changes about the privatization of the market economy and the making of new kinds of person and class subjects (Dunn 2004; Rivkin-Fish 2009). Li Zhang focuses on the “spatialization of class” by looking into the emerging middle class and their Hhousing/consuming practice in Kunming, China; homeownership and spatial reordering have risen as a contentious domain of class tension (2010). In Yanbian, the long embedded transnational mobility has constituted a certain personhood. As my ethnography elaborates, mobility has become a symbol of lack in cultural and social capital whereas immobility represents the economic stability.

development and self-improvement into a comprehensive program, a kind of government of the self, for ambitious individuals.

I take this social urge for a government of the self as one of the main characteristics of the current phase, what I call the “*Post-Korean Wind*.” I treat the *Post-Korean Wind*, not as a linear phase separated from the moment of the *Korean Wind*, but as a liminal social landscape in flux. I explore the time and space of the *Post-Korean Wind* in two ways. First, I shed light on the shifting meaning of mobility in Yanbian. Constant mobility has been a condition of life for the majority of Korean Chinese—nationally and transnationally—in the wake of China’s economic reforms, as I have elaborated throughout this dissertation. And yet, as China has gained status as a global economic power, immobility has increasingly come to symbolize affluence and stability—although it can certainly still signify the condition of being stuck or left behind. But there is an emerging contention and competition about the concept of *mobile life*. Second, alongside the increasing celebration of immobility, the majority of Korean Chinese (migrants) still *have to* move back and forth. They are not able to cut off the circuit of migration between China and Korea. Despite a wish to keep still, to settle down, many migrants believe that it is too late to join the Chinese economic boom, to “catch up” to those who have gotten ahead of them. In addition, these migrants, who have gradually become transnational working class subjects over the last two decades by working in Korea, are convinced that physical labor, based on the body as the only means of production (see chapter 4), is properly appreciated in Korea, but not in China.

Looking behind the scenes of Chinese development and the new Yanbian discourse of the government of the self, I argue that the *Post-Korean Wind* is a critical moment in which tensions escalate between the competing modernities of the Korean dream and the Chinese

dream. The *Korean Wind* is being rapidly re-characterized as an outdated fashion receding before the strong global influence of the Chinese economy. This chapter captures the futurity arising from this new juncture of Korean Chinese culture and the Chinese state. I also try not to dismiss the depression and dejection with which some Korean Chinese migrants and returnees have greeted the tensions between these two dreams.

6.1 *Homo economicus*: Be Entrepreneurs (*Laoban*), Not Workers (*Dagong*)!

In the social landscape of remittance development, returnees who become wealthy after working in Korea for years have often gotten special attention. They appear in Korean Chinese newspapers as successful role models who have changed their destinies by pursuing the Korean dream. The media celebrate the expertise as well as the frontier spirit of these new entrepreneurs, characterizing them as ethnic heroes. All these celebrations have spurred a local re-evaluation of the *Korean Wind*, an emigration that began simply as a means of getting ahead. But criticism of the returnees has gradually mounted. In these accounts, most Korean Chinese returnees spent their time in Korea as physical laborers without developing special marketable skills that could help them create their own business upon return to China. Therefore, after returning to China, these migrants are unemployable, unable to compete in the new Chinese job market. In addition, since these migrants/returnees tend not to belong to any “work unit” (*danwei*) in China, they are not eligible for pensions offered by the state. Consequently, whenever the money earned in Korea runs out, migrants/returnees must repeatedly return to Korea as *dagong* (physical workers). These repetitive return trips to Korea have become, not a backup plan, but a way of life for certain groups. Well-off Korean Chinese tend to look down upon this “floating population,” whose work in Korea stigmatizes them as “lower” or working class.

Moreover, newspapers and Korean Chinese intellectuals have warned that the trip to Korea is a shortsighted decision, an inadequate plan for the long-term future. Once they become *dagong* in Korea, these migrants must keep going back to Korea and face losing their social networks or *guanxi*² and social positions in China. While working as manual laborers in Korea for long periods, it is claimed, these migrants are unable to make any progress in self-improvement and become stuck in low-income positions, without access to the current economic expansion in China; they seem to be trapped within the circuit of migration. The creation of a permanent, Korean Chinese ethnic working class in Korea has aggravated the Korean Chinese subordination to Korea, Koreans, and Korean capital.³ Korean Chinese mass media and opinion leaders have encouraged migrants to cut off their dependence on Korean capital, urging them to follow a new direction—“Be *laoban*. Stop being *dagong*.” This discourse challenges Korean Chinese to learn new skills and technologies when they return from Korea and to enhance their *suzhi*, or civilized manners and “human quality” (Anagnost 2004; Yan 2009). The new belief is that Korean Chinese migrants should stop being exploited by Korean capital, but rather create their own businesses and increase their labor value in up-and-coming China.

In order to survive China’s privatization, Korean Chinese have construed transnational migration as a way to be responsible for the self. The encouragement of entrepreneurship, however, has gradually replaced the mobility that had previously been considered the best, or only, life choice for those Korean Chinese who would like to get

² Mayfair Meihui Yang (1994) introduced the term “*guanxi*” to describe a relationship between objects, forces, or persons. Once *guanxi* is established between two people, each can ask a favor of the other with the expectation that the debt incurred will be repaid sometime in the future.

³ Many Korean Chinese migrants have testified to the harsh discrimination of Koreans toward Korean Chinese. One Korean Chinese waitress asked, “How come they treat fellow Koreans in this bad way? But what can I do besides put up with this treatment? Making money is not easy.” Discrimination has been internalized and naturalized as an inevitable part of the Korean dream.

ahead. In unraveling the emerging subjectivity of *laoban* (entrepreneur), the concept of *homo economicus* is a useful analytical guide to understanding *Post-Korean Wind* Yanbian. *Homo economicus* refers to those who endlessly pursue their own interest, responding systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment (Foucault 2008; Dilts 2011).⁴ The later Foucault viewed *Homo economicus* as the epitome of American neoliberalism, symbolizing an entrepreneurship of the self-realized through the interface of government and the individual (Foucault 2008: 252-3).⁵ In this argument, “government”⁶ concerns not only practices of government of the other, but also practices of the self, the practices that try to shape and mobilize through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants, and lifestyles of individuals and groups (Dean 1999:12). Governing people is not to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assumes coercion and processes through which *the self is constructed or modified by himself*” (Foucault 1993: 203-4; the emphasis is mine). Here, Foucault characterizes the production of an autonomous and self-regulating subjectivity as a key to government of the self; that is, an action of the “self on self” (Dean 1999; Miller & Rose

⁴ Later Foucault became interested in the Chicago School’s human capital theory and the notion of *homo economicus*: “Human capital analysis starts with the assumption that individuals decide on their education, training, medical care, and other additions to knowledge and health by weighing the benefits and costs. Benefits include cultural and other non-monetary gains along with improvement in earnings and occupations, while costs usually depend mainly on the foregone value of the time spent on these investment” (Foucault 1993: 43; Dilts 2011: 7).

⁵ In *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey is critical of the ideal of “freedom” that is fundamental to neoliberalism; free market, freedom from the state intervention, free consumers, and free to exploit one’s fellow(2005). I am aware of the lack of critical perspective of “freedom” assumed in capitalism/neoliberalism in Foucault’s discussion. Foucault does not directly engage in the debate on class dynamic and struggles that have emerged in neoliberalism, while focusing on the reproduction of the particular neoliberal/free subjects.

⁶ Governmentality as an art of government has been defined as the “disposition of men and things,” “the conduct of conduct” (Foucault 1991), and “government at a distance” (Barry & Osborne & Rose 1996), and has animated discussions of poverty and welfare, social insurance and risk, health and education, and population and development. In this chapter, I focus more on the government of the self than the government of others or biopolitics that targets abstract populations (as I have elaborated in the Introduction).

1990: 26-28). Yet Foucault sees the government of the self as more than a simple investment for economic gain or reward, and furthers an ethical question: the government of the self is a practice that is explicitly self-conscious of its status as forging the self in relation to existing rules of conduct or styles of existence.

The government of the self has been contextualized by China scholars in the post-socialist setting of modern China, providing a better understanding of self-responsible post-socialist subjects.⁷ These studies show that the governing process is concrete but gradual, aiming to inscribe new attitudes of market logic onto bodies long habituated to what is represented as a rigid, state-centered socialism, eventually creating a new person altered by contact with ongoing dramatic changes in world capitalism (Dunn 2004; Hoffman 2010). Ethnographies on China, in particular, investigate a sort of neoliberal governmentality closely tied to the complex of Communist party-state-market, or “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics” (Wang 2006; Rofel 2007). The complex of state-market-party produces a self-governed subject, not only by the application of external power, but also by self-management. *Suzhi* especially emerges as a key discussion point in looking at the new working bodies fashioned to serve China as a world factory. Market requirements “individuate the body” to fit into the arrangement of machinery for efficient production in the factory (Ngai 2005); bodies must internalize work habits and a new sense of time, institutionalizing everyday life. The controlling logic modifies unruly peasants, remakes deficient and lazy bodies into cheap and docile ones, and generally requires the improvement of workers’ *Suzhi* (Yan 2009). The government of the self embraces the idea of self-

⁷ In *Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics*, Stephen Collier points out one of characteristics of economic reforms in the Post Soviet is to aim “responsibilize” citizens, “not just as subjects of need but as sovereign consumers making calculative choices based on individual preferences”(2011:8). The gradual inscription of the sense of responsibility is parallel to the discussion on “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristic.”

improvement and economic betterment, as an ethical project that market subject should internalize and habituate.

The concept of *Suzhi* frequently comes up in ordinary conversations with Korean Chinese. Most Korean Chinese, whether migrants or not, believe that self-transformation and self-modification is key to surviving China today. The rampant pursuit of “money-money” deserves moral criticism as a symptom of the “contamination of capitalism,” while at the same time it is widely accepted and practiced as a normative life choice. I view *homo economicus* not only as a collection of essential attributes for economic gain as a marketable subject, but also as an ethical aspiration, to be attained by improving one’s self-knowledge and acquiring sophisticated social manners to become a “civil” and “cultural” subject. While exploring the social imperative to become an entrepreneur as well as the failure of many returnees to become part of the new rising China, my analysis shows the hope and frustration surrounding *Suzhi* improvement—a crucial life project, an attempt to overcome the social limits of uneducated farmers and laid-off factory workers. In addition, two groups—those who have gone to Korea and those who have not—tend to develop different understandings of what it means to have good *Suzhi*. Exploring the social imperative for self-improvement, I suggest that it reduces social disparities and hierarchies into “personal problems.” This makes people believe that the tireless individual effort will enable them to correct their vulnerable life condition—to change their fate.

6.2 After the Korean Dream

6.2.1 Long Detour

On a hot sunny day in August 2008, I happened to drop by a used bookstore near downtown Yanji, packed with books published not only in Yanbian but also in North Korea.

When I walked in, Mr. Guo, the owner (in his mid thirties at the time), was following the stock exchange in one window on his computer, chatting with a girl through a webcam on another, and watching for shoplifters on his surveillance camera. He noticed I was a “Korean customer” to whom he could sell rare books at a higher price than usual, and started bringing books out from the back to show me. We fell into conversation. Mr. Guo had returned from Korea several months before after having worked there with his parents for the past ten years. Like other Korean Chinese, he had followed the “Korean dream.” During his ten-year absence, however, economic conditions had improved dramatically in China, and he found himself having a hard time “catching up” with other Chinese when he came back. But he was still very upbeat about his growing business. “You should know that these books are very rare and precious in Yanbian. I invested a lot of money that I earned in Korea to buy these old books. I also travel wherever I can to find them.” Giving me his business card, he asked me to tell others, especially other Koreans, about his bookstore. He also handed me the business card of his mother’s fortune-telling business right next door. “My mom is very good at fortune telling. Would you like your fortune told?” I answered, “Why not?”

* * *

Guo’s family moved to Yanji from a remot farming town in Heilongjiang in the early 1990s. Guo’s mother (I will call her Aunt Kim) and his father, who grew up in a pure Korean Chinese ethnic town and only had an elementary school education, do not speak Chinese fluently. They left their hometown, a “Han cave,” for Yanbian because they wanted to feel at home surrounded by Korean Chinese people. But Yanbian differed from their preconceived expectations. In spite of the Korean Chinese ethnicity they shared with the

people of Yanji, Aunt Kim felt lonelier because she was treated as a stranger or outsider (*waidiren*). They did not have any networks of friends or relatives in their new home. In Heilongjiang, the small Korean Chinese community was supportive and warm-hearted because Korean Chinese were a small ethnic group in a Han Chinese world. In Yanbian, however, Korean Chinese were everywhere, competing with each other. Aunt Kim felt that Yanbian people were too savvy and selfish and thus, hard to befriend. However, as lonely she felt in Yanbian, Aunt Kim knew that Yanbian was a much better place for her to start her hair salon business.

While her business in Yanbian was becoming stable in the early 1990s, Aunt Kim heard many rumors of Korean Chinese who went to Korea for family visits and brought Chinese medicine to sell there, earning a decent amount of money in a short period of time. The thought of making a trip to Korea piqued Aunt Kim's interest. When the Korean dream peaked in the late 1990s, many Korean Chinese moved to bigger cities in China as well as South Korea. As a consequence, the "migration business" that illegally smuggled Korean Chinese or arranged fake marriages for them was dramatically growing. The massive emigration resulted in a sharp decrease in the Korean Chinese population that furnished most of Aunt Kim's clients. The beauty salon still earned her a decent living, but Aunt Kim felt unsatisfied. One day a broker who arranged trips to Korea visited her salon. Aunt Kim was thrilled by this encounter.

Of course, it was all illegal, I knew. He asked me if I wanted to join his business or not. Since I had many customers coming and going, I could introduce them to the broker. That was his idea. By doing that, in fact, I made fair amount of money. On the one hand, I ran my beauty salon. On the other hand, I was working with the broker. I was a so-called "baby-broker" (*saeggi* broker who manages the trafficking). But one night I asked myself, why don't I go? I started preparing the trip first for my husband and my son. The broker helped us, and thus it happened easily. After they successfully got to Korea through the broker, I closed my business and followed them within a year. Since I knew the broker personally, I did not have to

pay as much money as others. I thought meeting him was the luckiest thing that happened in my life. I was so bold and brave, when I think about it now.

For the first couple of years, she worked as a waitress in Korean restaurants, like many other middle-aged Korean Chinese women. The labor was demanding, but she was making much more money than she had made running her beauty salon in China. Her skillful husband did not have difficulty finding a job in Korea. Her son was so popular with his Korean bosses that they rewarded him with a higher wage than other Korean Chinese workers. The Korean dream was coming true for her family; they became more and more prosperous. According to Aunt Kim, Korea was a very competitive and tiring place to be, and yet there was always the promise of earning more money through hard work. In fact, Aunt Kim felt more at home in Korea than in China. She adapted to Korean ways and enjoyed being free to speak Korean with other Koreans. She viewed Korea, and in particular Seoul, as cleaner, more organized, and more convenient than China. She thought that Koreans were better mannered and more civilized than the Chinese. She was so satisfied with life in Korea that she was able to forgive the hard labor and exhausting lifestyle. Most of all, her growing material prosperity made her want to stay in Korea longer and longer, in spite of her family being undocumented.

Everything seemed to be going well until Aunt Kim seriously injured her back.

Unable to perform physical labor any longer, she learned how to tell fortunes on the basis of one's date and time of birth. She was excited about her new career prospects.

I started telling fortunes in the street in front of a subway station when I was in Seoul. Many random people came to ask me about their life issues. Also, many Korean youngsters dropped by just to have fun, hearing about their futures and luck. The business was going great and I was really enjoying making good money. But when the global financial crisis affected the Korean economy in 2008, business slowed down. And the value of Korean money was going down, too. The Korean currency was devalued by half against the Chinese yuan. That is why we suddenly decided to leave Korea. We were afraid. We thought, if we stayed longer in Korea,

we would lose more money. As soon as we decided to leave, we packed and came back to China.

In fact it was her son, Guo, who most strongly insisted that they should go back. to China. He had become sick of doing simple and tiring physical work in Korea. In addition, Guo believed that he could not marry if he stayed any longer in Korea. He thought that Korean women would not marry Korean Chinese men, and it would be hard for him to find a Korean Chinese woman in Korea. He wanted to start a new life in China, by opening his own business and finding a young Korean Chinese bride in Yanbian. Aunt Kim, her husband, and her son were in the end satisfied with their ten years in Korea. They believe they have achieved the Korean dream. Upon leaving South Korea they received “black stamps” on their passports because of their undocumented overstay in the country. This meant they might not be able to visit Korea for the next several years. But, they wanted to hurry back to China in order to catch up the Chinese dream. But now it was time to move on to the Chinese dream

6.2.2 Settled: *Be Laoban* (Entrepreneur)!

Aunt Kim and Mr. Guo invited me to their newly decorated apartment to celebrate the Chinese New Year of 2009. She asked me to make dumplings with her family. While we chatted, off and on, about several different topics, Aunt Kim reflected on her return:

I really did not want to come back to China. But if I had stayed in Korea, I would have worked as a hostess in restaurants or as a cleaning lady in motels until I died. I cannot work like that. In addition, the money we made in Korea would not have been enough to support me into my old age there. With that money, however, we could start our business in China and secure the basic means of livelihood here. We can be *laoban* (business owner) without working for other Koreans. After returning from Korea, we bought three houses and decorated all of them. My son and I also started our businesses. My life has been tough with poverty and constant moving around in the past several decades. But, after all I have been through, I finally feel happy. This small office of mine is heaven for me.



Photo 15. Aunt Kim's Newly Decorated House. By June Hee Kwon (2009)

Aunt Kim believed that “[w]e should all do something for ourselves and by ourselves, if we want to make real money.” Her family followed the new ideas that celebrate entrepreneurship, or *laoban*. For the first three months after their return to China, Aunt Kim’s family was busy setting up a new life in Yanbian, spending much of the money they earned in Korea. They searched for the right location for a bookstore and bought new apartments to live in. Aunt Kim and her husband were excited about their new housing. They had never lived in a clean, modern apartment, and thanks to their newfound affluence they have been able to furnish their home with a wide screen Samsung TV, new furniture, a computer, and a washing machine. Despite their rural *hukou*, Aunt Kim’s family came to enjoy material prosperity in the city of Yanji—and it was the fruit of ten years’ hard labor in Korea. Her roundabout journey appeared to have ended here, in a new apartment and a modern lifestyle; nearly everything they owned had been purchased since her family had restarted their lives back in China. For her business, Aunt Kim’s warm, friendly, and

welcoming personality had already enabled her to secure a number of regular customers.

“Because China is rising, Yanbian is rising, too,” she told me.

So a lot of people are trying to open new businesses. When they do, these *laoban* come to ask me what their fortunes will be. Also, they ask me to come to perform a good luck ritual on the day they open their business. Those who are wealthy call me “*sunsangnim, sunsangnim*” (a Korean term that indicates “teacher,” in a respectful form). I am just an elementary school graduate from the countryside. I never imagined that the day would come when I was called “*sunsangnim*,” never in my life.

We laughed. Aunt Kim repeated to me time and time again, “These are the happiest days in my life, given how much I have been through.” Her repetitive “happy talk” seems to have two sources. One is her relief at not having to move any more, the fact that her family is now permanently settled. The constant moving between different cities and between China and Korea was quite wearing on her. Two, she is proud of being *laoban* of her own fortunetelling business and having earned the title “*Sunsangnim*.” Both her business and personal life have fulfilled the social imperative to become *laoban*. She has successfully engineered a completely new life in the aftermath of the Korean dream.

Her son, Mr. Guo, had also worked hard to get adjusted to the new China after he returned. He filled his bookstore with a large number of Chinese, North Korean, South Korean, and Yanbian books. His savings from his decade in South Korea allowed him to build this extensive collection in just a few months. He was helped by his previous experience as a street vendor of used books before he went to Korea.

Whenever I have extra money, I go book hunting from individual sellers, morning markets, and other street vendors. Even before going to Korea, I already knew the value of old and rare books. All old things--old books, old pictures, old money--will come to have great historical value. I believe I can make a lot of money by selling these rare things. I have a good eye for the price and value of books. And I know who will be interested in buying them. Can you guess? Koreans like you, who collect rare books from North Korea and Yanbian. They will buy my books, no matter how expensive. You know what my dream is? I will eat up all used bookstores in Yanbian in three years. My store will be *the* used bookstore in Yanbian.

To fulfill this aggressive plan to expand his business, Guo worked seven days a week. His mind was preoccupied with business: what used books to buy and how to sell more of them. In addition, while running the bookstore from nine to four o'clock, Guo would anxiously sit in front of his computer trading stocks, as I described at the beginning of the section. The extra income from the stock exchange would enable him to buy more books, he believed, so he could arrive at his goal sooner. He was also developing an online used bookstore to target Korean customers interested in books from North Korea and Yanbian. Since these books are mostly not available in Korea, he knew he could sell them at an inflated price.

Guo's family story shows us how the Korean dream has enabled a poor farm family to seek a new life of entrepreneurship, to become *homo economicus* in the pursuit of self-reinvention and *Suzhi* improvement. Aunt Kim's long journey of escape from poverty—from poor farmer to hair stylist to migrant broker to fortuneteller—has finally come to fruition. She has transformed herself, not only by telling fortunes for her customers, but also by achieving fortune in her own life. As she told it, she was born into a tough life, and yet she never stopped working to improve her economic situation. At the end of all her travels, Aunt Kim lives in a modern apartment surrounded by new possessions. She commutes everyday to her workplace (a tiny storage room) to meet her clients coming to ask about their fortune and future. Whenever I visited her workplace, she always said, "This small, humble office is next to heaven for me." Mr. Guo is also on the way to his dream. Whenever we had drinks or a meal, he would repeat his ambition to "eat up all used book stores in Yanbian in three years."

After ten years of working in Korea, a place believed to be a source of modernity and economic betterment for most Korean Chinese, Aunt Kim and Guo internalized and

practiced the idea of *homo economicus* that Yanbian social media and intellectuals promoted for returnees newly locating themselves within the rising Chinese economy. On the one hand, these returnees still embrace Korean lifestyles; they watch Korean soap operas and use Korean products. On the other, they have developed new entrepreneurial skills and new styles of networking in China. That is to say, returnees' everyday lives are filled with different, and competing, symbols of modernity. In the new scene of the *Post-Korean Wind*, I have gradually come to understand the constant striving to be a *homo economicus* and improve *Suzhi* as a series of desperate gestures by former farmers and transnational workers who lack a real social safety net to protect their vulnerable futures. In the next section, I analyze how "being in China without going to Korea" signifies belonging to a more modern and stable life, on the basis of two stories that tell us about the competing modernities and tension between two dreams.

6.3 Proudly Immobile

6.3.1 Mark of Lack: "Going to Korea"

The stories of returnees vary. Like Aunt Kim and Guo, some returnees used to be farmers who could not even dream about living in the city if they did not go to Korea. Some became *lobans*, expanding their own businesses such as restaurants, karaoke bars, and grocery stores. Some lived on the rent they collected from apartments that they purchased with money earned in Korea. Despite the economic achievements of these returnees, however, I gradually came to realize an emerging new view of the Korean dream in Yanbian. The position of Korean Chinese returnees has shifted, as I noticed when Mr. Guo admitted his frustration at having a hard time "catching up" upon his return. And certainly, not everybody is as happy or satisfied as Guo or Aunt Kim.

The critical voice of disrespect for those who have pursued the Korean dream has been found among the Korean Chinese who are especially proud of China and Chinese economic success, including high-ranking party members. They often argue for the non-necessity of going to Korea. They believe Korea to be a place controlled by “work-work” time (see chapter 4), and argue that Korean Chinese migrants belong to a lower social class in Korea, working *under* Koreans. Mr. Long, one of a group of government officers with whom I had dinner one day at a North Korean restaurant in downtown Yanji, intrigued me with his critique of what he viewed as the “epidemic” of Korean Chinese going to Korea. He insisted grimly that “only those who have nothing special to do or no ability to break through in China have gone to Korea.” He explained why he did not need to consider going to Korea, using his housing purchase history:

For example, my wife and I were offered a new apartment at an incredibly low price by our work unit (the Yanbian Zhou government) in the late 1980s when housing privatization had just started in Yanbian. We bought the first house assigned to me. Then we bought a second house, the one assigned to my wife. We did not pay much out of pocket. Also, I have received some gifts and bonuses for the New Year or special occasions. Unlike us, those who go to Korea have to pay for everything out of their pocket. They have to buy their houses at full price. They get no benefits since they do not belong to a work unit, let alone have access to “back-door money” (*duitdon* in Korean). My life is far better than theirs, although I might have less cash flow. I have been able to make ends meet in China. So I have never thought of going to Korea. Why should I?

Mr. Long, in his late fifties, a father of a son going to high school when I met him, had a wife who also worked for the government. After college graduation (he was in the first group of Chinese who took the college examination in 1978), he was assigned to a government job. Eventually he was promoted to a high-ranking position in the Yanbian Zhou government. As a prestigious official, he showed disdain toward those who became migrant laborers to South Korea:

Fifteen out of twenty of my close high school friends have worked in Korea. When there is an alumni gathering, there are more people coming from Seoul than here—that's where the majority is. They seem to have a better life with financial stability, buying apartments and cars and wearing clothes like Koreans. But when you look at them more closely, their lives are full of problems and troubles. A lot of them are divorced. Their kids have gone astray. They have gotten sick or injured from the heavy labor in Korea. Also, doing simple physical work for more than a decade under the bad treatment of Korean bosses has made them fools (*meojori* in Korean). They are incapable of starting a business and a new life back in China. They have made money, perhaps. But there is not much left over after buying an apartment out of pocket. Then they have to go back to Korea over and over. They've got nothing but a Korean accent, which is useless [he said in a contemptuous tone]. Can we say that it is a good life, losing everything but a useless Korean accent?

In fact, speaking with a Korean accent appears to be a minimal but crucial criterion in evaluating the extent to which returnees have adapted to and embodied the Korean way of life—referred to as “Korean water” (*Hankukmul* in Korean). For instance, Yanbian people often made fun of Korean Chinese migrants who imitated the Seoul accent, “awkwardly” mixing it with the Yanbian accent. I heard many of the Korean Chinese in Yanbian say they were “disgusted” by the bragging returnees who spoke with a Seoul accent and wore Korean-styled clothes. A Korean Chinese woman who returned to Yanbian to run her own grocery store told me, “I have tried to use a much stronger Yanbian accent since I came back from Korea. People talk a lot behind my back. If I even slightly mix in the Seoul accent, they point a finger at me. People are sensitive to the accent. Now, having been to Korea is not a proud thing to say, unlike before. Everybody has drunk the ‘Korean water’ and made money there.” It seems that going to Korea and speaking like a Korean are no longer markers of status in Yanbian, even though Korea retains a strong symbolic power as a source of remittances, new lifestyles and fashions, and modern culture. Increasingly, having a “weird” Korean accent or wearing Korean-styled clothing is being

interpreted as a marker of lack—a sign of being unable to make it in the new market economy of China.

By contrast, the perspective expressed by Mr. Long indicates confidence that his status in China is established precisely by distinguishing himself from those who went to Korea to make money. At the same time, those who have been away from China for long periods might have a difficult time adjusting to the vast, recent changes, as Mr. Guo indicated earlier. Returnees testify they are under serious pressure from those who belong to privileged work units and others who have gained economically in their absence. The most successful among the Yanbian “stay-at-homes” tend to express their pride with a bombastic attitude. A social split is becoming clearly demarcated, as Yanbian people now bluntly say, “Those who did not go to Korea ended up being much better off.”

6.3.2 In the *Chinese Dream*

During the years 2008 and 2009, I witnessed the impasse of returnees faced with a sluggish Yanbian economy,⁸ as I met with a number of returning migrants from Korea who were suffering from deep anxiety and frustration. At the same time, the crisis brought opportunities for those who followed the Chinese dream. For example, while taking advantage of the strong value of the Chinese currency against the Korean currency, some Korean Chinese merchants bought products in bulk from Korea cheaply and sold them in China for great profit. The profit margin was much bigger than when the Korean currency was stronger before 2008. Moreover, the strong yuan enabled Korean Chinese to enjoy a much greater

⁸ According to the statistics of Yanbian Customs, until 2008, about a billion dollars a year in remittances had been flowing from Korea to Yanbian. But in 2008, remittances dropped sharply to about \$700 million in the wake of the financial crisis, which was accompanied by a sharp depreciation of the Korean currency. The value of the Korean won has since bounced back, from 10,000 won: 40 yuan in 2008 to 10,000 won: 58.90 yuan in 2011. As the Korean currency shows renewed strength, Korean Chinese have rushed to exchange their Korean won into Chinese yuan in order to take advantage (*Yeonhap News*, May 1, 2011).

spending power when travelling in Korea. There gradually arose a different flow of Korean Chinese to Korea, one that includes business and tourism as well as low-wage labor migration.

In recent years Chinese tourists have become known as the main customers for imported, pricy products in luxurious Korean department stores—the “big players” are all Chinese.⁹ Korean newspapers occasionally report that after Chinese customers visit stores, the shelves are left empty. Even though the stories about Chinese big spenders are not specific to Korean Chinese, I met several Korean Chinese merchants in Yanbian who were enthusiastic about the relatively cheap prices of quality goods in the Lotte luxury department store in downtown Seoul, a magnet for tourists. I met a woman in her later forties, whom I call here Dang *Laoban*, who ran a well-known drug store in Yabian, and she shared her experiences of travelling in Seoul:

I went to Seoul with several friends of mine who have their own businesses in Yanbian. For a week, all we did in Seoul was shopping and eating, shopping and eating. The seafood in Korea was a lot cheaper and much better quality than in China. We ate until we could not eat anymore. I felt things were very cheap compared to Yanbian, and even to Beijing because we exchanged the Chinese yuan for the Korean won. Three of us spent more than \$30,000 in the fur coat section of the Lotte department store. We kept trying on different coats. The clerks knew that we were Korean Chinese and assumed that we were not able to buy the expensive stuff. I could tell that they were not as kind to us as they were to other Koreans or Japanese customers. But they had luxurious, good-quality items, and the price was comparatively low. We could not help buying the stuff. It was a great deal.

Dang *Laoban*'s consuming power was unusual in Yanbian, although she was not the only one who could spend as much money as she wanted. The encounter with Dang *Laoban*, in fact, complicated my understanding of Yanbian, as I had mostly experienced the region's deep dependency on the outflow of population and the influx of remittances. Additionally, she

⁹ In 2011 the Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industries and Hana Tour conducted a survey of 300 shopping tourists from China and Japan. The result demonstrates the rising consumer power of Chinese tourists: 32.3% of the Chinese surveyed purchased more than \$1,000 in South Korea, compared to only 4.2 % of Japanese tourists. 37.79% of Chinese and 81.5% of Japanese purchased less than \$500 (*Money Today* [Korean newspaper], Sep 7, 2011).

helped me rethink the spatial split that I discussed in the previous section, with Korea as work-filled, stress-inducing, and exhausting, and China as a place of relaxation, consumption, recharging. That is certainly how the two countries appear from the migrant perspective. But from the point of view of newly rising, wealthy merchants, the split turns out to be the opposite: Korea is a place of consumption and fun, whereas Yanbian is a space for work and profit-making.

I was introduced to Dang *Laoban* by Professor Lan at Yanbian University, who has been friends with her since high school. According to Professor Lan, Dang *Laoban* was one of the wealthiest people in Yanbian, and needless to say one of the most successful female entrepreneurs. When we met for a couple of hours in her office in downtown Yanji, I was able to discern the natural-born aggressive merchant behind her calm and friendly manner. Her biography offers some distinctive points. Dang *Laoban* was from a small rural town in Yanbian and grew up going to Han Chinese schools, from elementary school to university. As a result, she was more fluent in the Chinese language than Korean and felt more at ease with Han Chinese than with Korean Chinese—which is quite uncommon among Korean Chinese in Yanbian. Dang *Laoban* said that she had tried to think of ways to make more money, ever since she was young. She went to college in Sichuan. It took her a week to get there from Yanbian by train. Whenever she came back home from Sichuan for breaks, she brought goods from Sichuan and sold them in Yanbian. When she went back to school in Sichuan, she brought different goods from Yanbian and sold them in Sichuan. Despite the stress and fatigue of carrying her luggage full of things to sell back and forth, she enjoyed trading and gaining margins. She recalled that she did not make large profits, but they were big enough to enable her to get through her college education on her own.

After she graduated, she was assigned by the government to work in a chemical factory located in Jilin City. It was a decent job but she did not make as much money as she had wanted. In addition, after she got married, she wanted to buy the apartment assigned to her work unit. But she could not afford to buy it on her own and had to borrow money—though she thought this was a good deal at the time. Still, she did not like being in debt, so in order to pay it off, Dang *Laoban* decided to quit her job to find a better way to make money. She did *xiahai*, meaning she “plunged into the ocean,” leaving behind job security in search of a new life opportunity by running her own business. Although she had quit her work unit, she still relied on the network of contacts she had built there, and began selling Chinese medicine in the early 1990s. Dang *Laoban* put in a great deal of effort to gain a better sense of her new business: she worked during the day and studied at night with medical books belonging to her husband, who was a doctor.

It was in the early 1990s that Dang *Laoban* gained momentum in her business. At the time, Chinese medicine was in high demand in Yanbian because Korean Chinese liked to bring it as an authentic, special gift from China when they visited families and relatives in Korea with whom they had had no contact for decades. Since there were few business dealings between China and Korea at the time, Chinese medicine was rare and highly prized in Korea. As more and more Korean Chinese came to realize its value in Korea, Chinese medicine was transformed from a gift into a commodity. However, as waves of Chinese medicine penetrated the Korean medicine market, the Korean government tightened regulations, instituting a regimen to distinguish fake medicine from authentic. A large amount of “inauthentic” Chinese medicine became unsellable and was disposed of, and as a result,

many Korean Chinese who had bought Chinese medicine in bulk went into sudden bankruptcy. Their investment turned out to be a total loss.

However, even after the severe drop in its value in the mid-1990s, Chinese medicine remained popular because it was believed to be an essential item for Korean Chinese have to carry to Korea for their own use, for routine body care and for use in medical emergencies. Korean Chinese were simply accustomed to taking Chinese medicine rather than western medicine, and additionally the cost of drugs and remedies was thought to be too high in Korea. As more people travelled to Korea, the demand for Chinese medicine rose again. Although Dang *Laoban* never migrated to work in Korea herself, her business expanded along with the flow of migration. In other words, Dang *Laoban*, who stayed behind in Yanbian, depended on the Korean Chinese migration for her material affluence just as much as the massage therapist Number 5 relied on the influx of remittances for his income (as recounted in chapter 2). Remittances have provided a critical thread that connects very disparate subjects who contribute to and benefit from Yanbian's economy of migration.

Dang *Laoban* has successfully diversified into a new business—a hot-pot(火锅 *huoguo*) restaurant. I asked her what the method of her success was.

I just like to make money. Also, I like to spend money. And, I like to give away money to the poor and sometimes, my employees. I have always tried to figure out how to make more money, ever since I was young. I thought of going to Korea. But then I would have to do some simple job like waitress or nanny. I don't want to do that—and I don't want to work under a Korean boss. Those who go to Korea cannot use their brains; they are only using their bodies. You know what? I cannot communicate with my friends who come back from Korea. They have all become fools after working in Korea for a decade, while here I keep thinking of how to expand my business.

Dang *Laoban* sharply summed up the main narrative of the waning Korean dream: Yanbian people were literally saying (as Mr. Long stated in a previous section) that labor migrants who go to Korea to do simple and tedious work become “fools” (*mojori* or *babo* in Korean) after

using only their bodies and not their brains for years. In this view, Korean Chinese migrants are lacking in their *Suzhi*. The encounter with Dang *Laoban* inspired me to think further about the rapid economic and social differentiation occurring in Yanbian. It is the rising class of the newly wealthy who make migrants/returnees feel left behind.

* * *

The testimonies of Mr. Long and Dang *Laoban* demonstrate a new understanding of mobility in Yanbian: namely, that moving freely across borders is no longer celebrated, but is instead now seen as a sign of lack, of inability to compete. The ways in which Dang *Laoban* and other well-off Korean Chinese in Yanbian now understand mobility seems to be quite disparate from what has appeared in other migration studies. For example, Aiwaha Ong argues that flexible citizenship is a cultural logic of capitalism that enables transnational subjects a more fluid means of accumulating capital and acquiring social prestige. In an accelerated transnational setting, wealthy diasporic Chinese collect multiple passports and challenge the static relationship between the state and citizen. Ong does not mean here that state control has abated, but rather that nation states and mobile subjects develop new methods of articulation with capitalism in the late modernity (Ong 1999). Here, mobility serves as a symbol of economic power and political potential to allow the mobile subjects to negotiate with the state and market in search of capital accumulation. On the other hand, in *Cosmologies of Credit*, Julie Chu discusses the experiences of Longyan Chinese who pay to be smuggled into the US in pursuit of a better life, and portrays their earnest desperation, often maintained through multiple unsuccessful attempts. According to Chu, “[I]mmobility in all senses of the word—physical, social, and economic—had become the ultimate form of displacement in a post-Mao world boasting of forward momentum and global openings.”(Chu 2010:259). Chu

sees mobility as a normative choice, in the sense that a majority of Longyan Chinese have pursued or hoped for it, and also as a necessary condition of modernity that enables marginalized subjects to overcome the stagnant and delimiting positioning as “peasants” in a “peasant village.”

The experience of Korean Chinese migrants might be analogous to that of the overseas Chinese or Longyan’s peasants, in that all three have pursued their dreams by becoming flexible and mobile subjects. However, focusing on the testimony of Dang *Laoban* and Mr. Long, we can discover a new set of narratives surrounding mobility, ones in which some Korean Chinese have begun to mock mobility that marks a lack of economic security. This group of Korean Chinese believe “immobility”—staying in Yanbian and expanding their businesses—is a proud symbol of economic stability and prestigious status rooted in local politics and economy. Mobility has become a less celebrated and triumphant life choice because it causes migrants/returnees to lack sufficient social networking and thereby fall out of step in the lively, emerging Chinese economy. Their frequent movements make migrants lose the opportunities that the Chinese dream could provide. Ironically, in this discourse “immobility”—in contrast to Chu’s argument, which sees “immobility as a form of displacement”—is understood as an effective means by which the non-migrant Korean Chinese have achieved economic gains, as they have been able to stay on the same page with the booming Chinese economy.

6.4 *Leave Again*

6.4.1 Free/Caught

As my research moved toward its end, I found that the tension between the Korean dream and Chinese dream was constantly rising. One particularly intense moment

demonstrated the contradictory and ironical aspect of the Korean dream, a conversation triggered by my simple question, posed to a pair of former migrant workers: How do you feel about returning home after working in Korea for ten years?

I knew Mr. Yun and Mr. Shin from the church that I described in the Introduction. I was especially close to Mr. Yun because I had spent more time with him; he was an active member of the Korean Chinese Association, a group that insisted on the inclusion of Korean Chinese in the category of “Overseas Korean.” Both men, in their late forties at that time, were enthusiastic to engage in conversation, and recalled their time back in Korea in contrasting ways. We talked casually while sitting at KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) in downtown Yanji.

Mr. Shin: China has changed a lot. It’s now much better off than when I left. People don’t worry about having enough food anymore. But, however good China has gotten to be, I still want to go back to Korea as soon as possible. I just miss the feeling when the flight lands at the Incheon airport. It smells different and it feels so good being in Seoul.

Mr. Yun [*in a grumpy tone*]: What’s good about it? I was deported from Korea. I am still full of anger toward Korea. It’s a bad country, which kicked out its own ethnic people. There are no basic human rights. The law sucks. The discrimination was unbearable. The exploitation was extreme. I would not even want to piss toward Korea [*in a very angry voice*].

Mr. Shin: What are you talking about? You say you hate Korea, but you still want to go back, don’t you? I know you’re getting ready to go back.

Mr. Yun: It’s not because I like it, but only because I can’t make here as much as in Korea. I just want to use the opportunity. I need money.

Mr. Shin: You’re fooling yourself. We have to admit that Korea has offered great opportunities for Korean Chinese. Without advantages from Korea, how could Yanbian be economically improved this much and this fast? Look at the Han Chinese farmers. They are still poor.

Mr. Yun: Not really. The policy of the Chinese government has become better and better. Now, Han Chinese farmers are better off than Korean Chinese who went to Korea. There is no worry about starvation. They are well-off and well-fed, and they’ve never been to Korea.

Mr. Shin: Are we pigs? Whenever I hear people say that China is the best country due to plentiful food and free time, I get really pissed off. Food is not enough for life. We are not animals. We should have a life. I cannot find the life in China that I had in Korea. Yes, the work was very hard and tiring. But I had a great time there, and learned a lot. I took classes on exercise, yoga, and computer run by the local government.

Mr. Yun: Where did you find time to do all that? Police were tracking me down all the time. I was always nervous about deportation—that, and money.

Mr. Shin: You must not have managed your life there, then. We were all in the same situation. I was illegal and the police were after me, too. Even with the risk, I liked being in Korea. Here I can't get used to the way people spend too much time eating and drinking. I feel I am wasted here, without producing anything special.

Mr. Yun: If we have money or power in China, it will be the best place to be. China will be the greatest economic power in the world, exceeding even America. It'll happen in just a few years.

Mr. Shin: China and some Chinese might have a lot of money. But there's no civility, no politeness. Look at the Han Chinese spitting all over the world. It's really gross. Public space is very dirty. Nobody really takes care of it. Chinese are way behind in cultural manners (*suzhi*). Do you remember how clean the streets were in Seoul? We are human beings. Life should have more to it than just eating and drinking. I want to get back to the life I had in Korea—I just miss it.

I am pausing their argument here. It had nearly degenerated into a fight. In fact, I was embarrassed at the loud, angry conversation that had erupted in public space while I was trying to subtly mediate between them. At the same time, I was wondering what really sparked their intense disagreement. It might have been partly because they were insisting on different interpretations of similar experiences as undocumented migrant workers in Korea. It may also have been because the two men were in contrasting situations—one (Mr. Yun) was stuck in China and the other (Mr. Shin) was still able to travel between the two countries after the amnesty took effect.

Having gotten to know Mr. Yun over the previous couple of years, I understood why he was speaking in an upset tone by showing his odd contradiction between what he said and what he really wanted. Mr. Yun was deported from Korea in 2007 and thus unable to travel freely to Korea, unlike other returnees who got the benefit of the amnesty that the

Korean government granted to Korean Chinese undocumented workers. He missed out on applying for amnesty because he was undecided about whether to stay in Korea longer or not. He had urgently needed to make more money in Korea—his wife was very ill at the time, and his daughter was preparing for college. If he stopped sending money to them, they would be in serious financial trouble. There was no other source of income for his family unless he sent remittances. But the conditions of the amnesty were that he had to leave Korea for one year before he was eligible to return to Korea (see chapter 4)—which would cut off his remittances just when his family really needed them. While he was hesitating, Mr. Yun was arrested at work and deported back to China.

By contrast Mr. Shin, who applied for amnesty on time, became a free-moving subject who could enjoy the “smell” and “feeling” of being in Seoul. He said, “Whenever I remember the moment that the airplane hits the ground of Incheon airport, I become excited. I cannot wait for the moment to come again.” Mr. Shin looked proud of and happy with his working experience in Korea, although his friends in China looked down on him because in Korea he worked a low-wage construction job. Some of his friends who had never gone to Korea had done very well in the wake of China’s global rise. He was honestly shocked at the amount of money that they were making. His humble achievements were not comparable to those of his friends who ran their own businesses and benefited from the current economic trends in China. They were experts at mobilizing their networks and raising back-door capital, neither of which he would be capable of doing. Nonetheless, Mr. Shin is confident about himself. In his view, he has learned “lessons” from Korea that his wealthy friends who stayed in China could never know. The most important of these lessons, Mr. Shin said, had to do with manners—not spitting in public, refraining from littering, lining up at the subway.

Knowledge of such manners enabled Mr. Shin to judge who was “cultured” and who wasn’t. Moreover, he liked what he considered the Korean habit of speaking in milder tones and listening respectfully to others, compared to the louder and more boisterous way of talking in Yanbian. As he told me, in a confessional tone,

I would not want to be known as Korean Chinese, as I don’t act or speak like other Korean Chinese. I have made a special effort to embody manners and orderliness because I would like to be seen as cultured and civilized. That is why I was very displeased about the uncultured manners in China—spitting, shouting, taking their shirts off in public. They have no manners, whether they have money or not.

This statement demonstrates Mr. Shin’s search for “something else” beyond money and free time, his conviction that “[w]e are not pigs.” Mr. Shin seemed to lean sharply toward Korean manners, accepting them as more modern and polite—and yet not all his memories about Korea were good, either. He had to put up with harsh discrimination. His Korean employers were often exploitive, forcing him to work for long hours and treating him as a second-rate citizen. There was no job security, and he did not know a single person in Korea who deserved to have his full trust. He had no health insurance. When he got sick, he had to nurse himself back to health without access to a doctor, since he could not afford the high cost. Regardless of the adversity, hardship, and insecurity of working in Korea, however, Mr. Shin said he could not overestimate the satisfaction of making money and gradually increasing his savings. Sometimes, he received raises, occasionally big ones, in recognition of his labor. Mr. Shin said it was not all bad to be in Korea, and he was able to draw some meaningful lessons from his time there.

I have learned how Koreans divide hours into minutes to use time in an effective way and how every hour is converted into money. In Korea, one minute and even one second is counted as money, unlike in China, where time is too loose and too plentiful. There is nothing free in Korea. Even Koreans older than sixty or seventy are still working, still leading their lives. You know what? There are much more poor people in Korea than in China. In China, most people own houses and there

are few beggars seen in the streets. But because Korea is a capitalist country, there is less support from the government. It is very obvious in Korea; if there is no work, there is no life. It is a brutal and competitive society. I was the only one I could rely on. I had to take care of myself. Now, I have nothing sacred in my life—I will do whatever it takes to survive.

The argument was intense, emotional, explosive, and his confession was compelling. At the end of the conversation Mr. Shin told us he was preparing to go back to Korea. After growing accustomed to construction work in Korea, he had come up with a new concept of life: “If there is no work, there is no life.”¹⁰ He said that he was good at disciplining himself in terms of handling time, money, and his body as to continue to work, and he also enjoyed organizing his life around work, as other Korean Chinese migrant workers also testified in chapter 4. Contrary to the assumptions of the discourse of entrepreneurship, Mr. Shin, a proud *dagong*, has also developed methods of governing himself and internalized these principles in order to become a proper worker in Korea. More importantly for him, he has adopted civility and cultural manners as the core principles of a good life. As he steadfastly maintains, “We are not pigs.”

His life seems to be far from the ideal now promoted in Yanbian: “Be *laoban*, stop being *dagong*.” Even in the face of mockery, however, he repeatedly emphasized the priority of *suzhi* over money, *suzhi* that he believed he had acquired by living in a different and more “developed” world. His view contrasts starkly with those of Mr. Long and Dang *Laoban*, who exhibited little respect toward such floating migrants as Mr. Shin. He insisted confidently “Those who never went to Korea don’t know about *the world*. They’re just big frogs in a small pond.” It is true that migration was a channel through which he learned

¹⁰ In *The Problem with Work*, Kathi Weeks analyzes work not as a simple economic practice, but as the primary means by which individuals are integrated into social, political, and familial modes of cooperation. She also views work as an essential part of life that transforms subjects into the independent individuals of the liberal imaginary; it is construed as a basic obligation of citizenship (2011:7-8). But she remains critical of work’s domination of life in the modern world.

about the world, in a form of “social remittance”(see chapter 2). After the amnesty, he became a frequent traveler between China and Korea, in contrast to Mr. Yun, for example, who lacked the freedom to go to Korea, because of his previous deportation. But Mr. Shin’s life was caught within the six-year rhythm of circulation, “1-3-2” (as I elaborated in chapter 4), a rhythm that was and is subject to change under the fluctuating migration policy of the Korean government. His situation, like many other Korean Chinese who have moved back and forth, is contradictory: he is *free but caught*. And he is moving but still on the margin, both in China and Korea, as a transnational working class subject.

6.4.2 Caught/Caught

When I met Mr. Yun again in Yanbian in 2009, he was barely making ends meet in China, working at a local restaurant. At the same time, he was trying every possible means to leave China—including going to Australia as a farm worker, or to the US as a simple manual laborer. In addition, he was still trying to get into Korea, regardless of his professed hatred for the place. After a big dinner on a piercing cold day in January, Mr. Yun suggested that I stay over in his daughter’s room instead of going back in the dark and cold to Yanji. His daughter was eighteen years old and attended a Han Chinese school. She could barely speak Korean, although she did understand and communicate with her parents and grandmother in Korean. When I came to her room, she was studying for an English exam to go to an Australian university. If she got in, it would create a chance for Mr. Yun to go to Australia as a parent of a student, which was another of Mr. Yun’s ideas for getting out of China. As he had previously told me, his wife was too sick even to walk around in the house. She had suffered complications after back surgery a few years before. The doctors could not tell what exactly was wrong with her. Their dining table was full of bottles of different medications that she

was on to mitigate her pain and various symptoms. They took up a considerable portion of the monthly household budget. Mr. Yun's mother-in-law also lived in the house, and she helped with the cooking and cleaning.

Although I was planning to stay just one night in Mr. Yun's place, I ended up staying another couple of days on Mr. Yun's insistence. "When would we meet again?" he exclaimed. During my stay, I helped his daughter with the English exam and hung out with her, watching her favorite TV shows and listening to her favorite music. These several days allowed me to talk to Mr. Yun's family and see how Mr. Yun's time was spent, structured, and planned. I came to understand better the fury that Mr. Yun expressed in the conversation above; he was truly desperate to leave China, where he was caught without making much money and without much of a future.

He certainly tried everything he could to get out. His usual morning routine included calling around to various brokers in the migration business. If a possibility had developed for him to get a visa to go to any country, he went down to the office to see what he could do. But it was apparently very hard for him to get anything, even faked or manipulated visas, let alone one to Korea, where he had been deported from. I also noticed that he obsessively played the lottery (彩票 *caipiao*) every night. It seemed like far more than a mere hobby for him. After dinner, he always went to the lottery store where a crowd of people gathered to see which number would be the winner. One night, Mr. Yun took me there and explained how it worked. I understood only vaguely, even he repeated everything. He shared some information and greetings with the men in the store. After we got back home, I found out that lottery-related "research" kept him up till 2 AM. I asked, "Don't you sleep?" He said, "I have

something to study.” He laughed then, but he was serious about his “studies.” In his financial desperation, Mr. Yun was trying to crack the logic of the lottery.

As I portrayed in my discussion of “the split bodies and split time” of Korean Chinese migrants as they juggle between “too-much-time” in China and “too-little-time” in Korea, half of Mr. Yun’s life was lost after he was deported back to China; he had been very busy with work in Korea, but now had no work in Yanbian. I have to point out, however, that Mr. Yun’s desperation was different from what I have elaborated in chapter 4. While most Korean Chinese migrant workers, like Mr. Shin above, have moved back and forth between China and Korea under the condition of the amnesty and the “1-3-2” rhythm, Mr. Yun was caught in China, unable to go, not only to Korea, but also to other countries, due to his unlucky and untimely deportation. Unlike Mr. Guo and Aunt Kim, who have become *laoban* after saving every penny earned in Korea, Mr. Yun did not have much savings because the money he had earned in Korea was still the only source of income for his household, and much of it had to be spent for his wife’s medication and daughter’s tuition.

Now he did nothing but watch his friends and relatives make better money than he ever did. “I am really pissed off whenever I think of the moment I got caught for deportation and see other people freely moving around. It doesn’t matter whether they’re working as a lower-class *dagong* under Korean bosses. They’re working in Korea and making better money than me in China.” The missed opportunity to apply for the amnesty exposed him to the wide disparity between those who can move and those who cannot. Stymied by unpredictable and fluctuating visa regulations, Mr. Yun has become ever more depressed and dejected as he is confronted by his intractable situation every single moment, without being able to find any exit except “studying” the logic of the lottery.

In fact, he had tried very hard to find work since he was deported from Korea, Mr. Yun lamented. Whenever he got paid in China, however, he could not avoid comparing the wages, asking himself, “What if I had worked the same kind of job for the same hours in Korea?” While he cursed the Korea that inhumanely deported him, I also found that he lived on his memories of Korea—how much he had made per day, what good friendships he had developed there, how hard-working he had been there, and so forth. His constant remembrances of his time in Korea had prevented him from working in China, by making him want more and more to leave China as soon as possible. His body was caught in China while his mind was in Korea. The deported Korean Chinese, like Mr. Yun, were caught, neither living in nor leaving China. They did not have enough capital to invest in or open new businesses as *laoban*. Nor did he want to get paid the very low wages of *dagong* in China. His future, like the lottery, had become too contingent, dependent on random luck and unpredictable timing, and had little to do with his own strivings and hard work. He was caught.

6.4.3 *Out of League*

While studying the implicit but embedded social split between those who went to Korea and those who did not, one lingering question was about the actual dynamics and feelings between two groups. Another returnee, named Park, in his late thirties and migrating back and forth between China and Korea, highlighted his anxiety by describing the widened social split in Yanbian in a tone of frustrated confession—how he felt about being back at home and the meaning that was attached to his work in Korea.

Now I feel ashamed of working in Korea. If I say to my friends that I am going back to Korea to work, then, they say, you’re *still* going there? What for? They look down on me, I think. That’s why I often just say that I have a business in Southern China—Shenzhen or Guangdong. I don’t want to say what exactly I am doing in Korea. I’m kind of secretly moving back and forth without telling the truth. I

have no education, no special skills. All I have is my body [the word he uses actually connotes something more like “*flesh*” (*momdungari* in Korean)]. Thus, what I, as a Korean Chinese, can do in Korea is nothing more than simple, low-end physical labor, by using my body. I have been working hard as well as spending hard. To be honest with you, I don’t have much savings since I tend to spend money as soon as I make it. I just assume that I can keep earning as long as I work in Korea. That is true for all Korean Chinese. But, the job is boring, same old, same old. When it gets really bad, I think I can’t live like this forever. But, once my money runs out in Yanbian, there is no way for me to make it up except by going back to Korea. I have a son and a wife to support, and there is a limit to the money I can make in Yanbian. I don’t know what to do to make money here. I don’t have enough of a social network to start off a new business. Here people spend a lot of money eating and drinking. If I kept pace with them, I’d go broke quickly. I have no idea where their money is coming from. When I meet these wealthy friends who used to be poorer than me, I can’t talk to them. There’s something in common among them, but I don’t know what that is. I feel like there is *something* that I am missing. I can’t cut into their conversation. I feel out of their league, lagging behind what’s going on in Yanbian and in China.

Mr. Long and Dang *Laoban*’s denigration of migrants as “fools” migrants does, in some ways, dovetail with the compelling confession of Mr. Park and his feelings of loss and inferiority. Mr. Park expressed unexpected feelings of embarrassment about staying in Yanbian, and believes he can never be as well integrated into Yanbian as he was before. This new feeling of *being uncomfortably at home* has made him start reevaluating the gains and losses of his persistent pursuit of the Korean dream.

In the late 1990s when the Korean dream swept through Yanbian, Mr. Park made up his mind to go to Korea and found a broker to give him the fake documents to get there. He recalled he was full of dreams and believed the saying, “If you go to Korea, your back will ache from gathering the dollars.” Of course, the rumor he wanted to believe turned out to be an extreme exaggeration, but his work in Korea was fairly rewarding, and the trip was worth trying despite the high risk of apprehension as an illegal migrant and the high fees he had to pay the illegal brokers. There was no denying—it was a good deal. Mr. Park has witnessed the power of remittance, expressed in his capacity to purchase a new apartment and fancy clothes. For the last ten years, Mr. Park, as one of the earlier seekers of the Korean dream in his rural

hometown, diligently followed it for ten years, determined not to live like his parents, who had been poor farmers.

Yet the limits of the Korean dream have been gradually revealed over the past couple of years. The returnees that I met, including Park, have accumulated many anxieties, concerns, and frustrations pertaining to their life of migration. The frustrations seem to be multi-layered. First of all, the relative value of remittances has sharply diminished because the income gap between China and Korea has become much smaller than it was a few years ago, and the exchange rate has come to work against Korean Chinese migrants as the Korean won showed its weakness in tandem with the global financial crisis. Secondly, it turns out that remittances cannot be accumulated or expanded if the families of migrants merely spend it on the day-to-day cost of living without making investments. In other words, remittances cannot work properly as a source of wealth unless the money is carefully managed and re-invested (see chapter 3). Thirdly, unskilled and service-centered, low-end jobs do not promise a better tomorrow, but instead the endless repetition of the same simple work patterns—what Marx called “tomorrow as today” (Marx 1986). Migrants who move between two countries seem to be flexible and mobile, but at the same time, they are trapped within the migration circuit as a cheap source of labor; they are in the six-year rhythm—“1-3-2”—as discussed in previous chapter. Mostly importantly, their long absence from Yanbian caused them to lack the social networks essential for doing business in China. The feeling of displacement and loss turns out to be actual and material rather than simply emotional. They are missing something they should have known they needed, as Mr. Park testified. The “something”—the behavior code for economic and social success—might be key to overcoming their situation, but the gap

between the already successful and the recent returnees becomes more visible and wider all the time.

Despite the drawbacks, Mr. Park tried to stay positive: he wanted to end his life in Korea as a construction worker and start a new business in China. At the end of December 2009, he was busy travelling around several cities in China making plans to open a restaurant business. He did some market research, but the results were not too promising. It turned out that Yanbian was already too packed with restaurants and other service industries—stimulated by remittances from Korea. Cities in Shandong where Koreans and Korean Chinese are concentrated, such as Qingdao, Yantai, and Weihai, were too expensive for him to break into.

One day when I joined a gathering with Mr. Park and his friends over drinks at a bar in Yanji, he was filled with regrets. “I should have come back a few years earlier, before the boom,” he said. “I’m afraid I’m too late.” Two of his friends disagreed. One of them said, “We did the right thing at the time. I made a lot and spent a lot. No regrets. I miss the time in Korea so much: working, drinking, eating, traveling around.” The divided opinions surrounded the Korean dream and the *Korean Wind* made me recall the argument between Mr. Yun and Mr. Shin. Korean Chinese continue to engage with, and actively re-evaluate what they have done and what they will have to do in the era of the *Post-Korean Wind*.

I called Mr. Park two weeks later to ask how his market research went in Weihai, Shandong. His phone was off. One of his friends told me that he had left for Korea two days ago. I remembered that Mr. Park’s working visa was still valid. He was gone back into the circuit of “1-3-2,” pursuing a temporary future, now caught between two dreams.

6.5 Conclusion

In the wake of economic reform, many Chinese have gone through an endless, dramatic self-modification and transformation by frequently jumping between completely different occupations and becoming the other to the self, as Xin Liu powerfully illustrates in his study of the new landscape of rapid development in southern China (Liu 2005). Both converging on and diverging from the overall pattern of Chinese development and self-transformation, this chapter has explored the ways in which the *Korean Wind*—an ethnic-specific fashion for transnational migration, but also East Asian economic occurrence in the context of the global economy—has re-invented Korean Chinese as self-responsible subjects in a privatized China. In this last chapter, I have taken a look into the consequence of the two decades of the *Korean Wind*, especially in relation to the recent rise of the Chinese economy. My field research, mostly conducted during the financial crisis (2008-9), allowed me to observe the emergence of the liminal social landscape of the *Post-Korean Wind*. This particular moment exhibits a new intensity and contentiousness surrounding the concepts of mobility, modernity, and futurity, as Korean Chinese find themselves situation between the Chinese and Korean dreams. My ethnography analyzes the ongoing hope and frustrations of migrants and the growing Korean Chinese reevaluation of the *Korean Wind* with a focus on the widely circulated social imperative for entrepreneurship and the government of the self—“be *laoban*, stop being *dagong*.”

My findings are twofold. First, I conclude that the concept and practice of mobility is in critical flux in the *Post-Korean Wind* moment, with a view emerging of mobility as a mark of socio-economic inadequacy, whereas immobility is coming to be seen as correlating with affluence and stability. Second, despite the emergent social imperative to stay in China and not

to become a migrant laborer, mobility is still a deeply embedded part of Korean Chinese culture, even if migrants have gradually become more marginalized. I have argued that the Korean Chinese have fashioned a *mobile ethnicity* as a way of dealing with the contingencies of contemporary economic reform. But their way of working for a better future—their particular government of the self—has created unexpected vulnerabilities, sealing them into a circuit of migration as a transnational ethnic working class.

Despite the social split seen in this chapter at the moment of the *Post-Korean Wind*, I do not mean to suggest that the Chinese dream has replaced the Korean dream in Yanbian. Rather, I aim to highlight the new meaning of mobility emerging from the widely circulated social imperative that advises migrants/returnees to cut off the endless migration cycle and settle down permanently in China. In addition, I want to suggest that the Korean Chinese idea of modern subjectivity—having good *Shunzhi*—is not fixed, but rather open to debate, depending on the extent to which personal transnational experiences and social capital are integrated into the idea of what it means to be a “more modern” subject. The thriving, yet oddly dejected borderland of Yanbian, a place where nobody is truly immune to the *Korean Wind*, showcases the cultural, economic, and political intersection, the flux and transition, between two dreams.

EPILOGUE

Follow-up research that I conducted in the summer of 2011 confirmed that the Chinese dream, introduced in chapter 6, had by then come into play in every corner of Yanbian. Both Korean Chinese and Han Chinese have embraced the remarkably rapid Chinese economic rise and the growing influence of China in the global economy. The curse-like-prediction that one of Han Chinese tax drivers shared with me—“Koreans will come to China as dagong (workers) and in ten years we Chinese will exceed America”—seemed to have already become a reality. During my research, I heard over and over stories of personal economic betterment combined with strong national pride, accompanied by concrete examples of development: a new highway connecting Yanbian to the Northeast Chinese cities and thence to Beijing; the conspicuous consumption of super-wealthy Chinese; increasing budgets for government projects and schools. The patriotic celebrations and national pride I witnessed were unprecedented in my experience.

A meeting with members of the Association of Korean Chinese Writers was not exceptional. The writers gave me a warm welcome and we caught up on all the news for the last year and half while I had been away from Yanbian. Our conversation mainly covered the economic boom and the increasing budget assigned to the Association, money that now enabled some of them to travel to Korea. This support made the writers feel more the equals of Korean writers, who used to show them disrespect on the basis of their lack of cultural and economic capital. One of the writers, Mr. Choi, said, “We do not have to be daunted by Koreans any more. I felt thrilled about my fat wallet. It wasn’t like the last time we were there, when we were always in an inferior position, always asking Koreans for more money.”

At this moment of the *Post-Korean Wind*, as I termed it in chapter 6, Korean Chinese and Yanbian have truly transitioned to a different stage of economic development, and a different kind of relationship with Korea and Koreans. Not only these Korean Chinese writers, but also professors, journalists, and entrepreneurs that I met during the visit are re-characterizing what it means to be Korean Chinese in this new moment, foregrounding the strong potential of the “Chinese dream.” But in the midst of all the boastful conversation at the writers’ dinner, a story told by Mr. Choi changed the dinner mood dramatically. It conveyed the realities of emotional complexity and economic/political entanglement that Korean Chinese still face, living in the borderland.

Mr. Choi is a renowned, award-winning Korean Chinese novelist. He is originally from a small border town, as is his wife. He started his story by introducing his hometown to me as a place I had to visit someday as a researcher of Yanbian. Most farming towns on the border, like his hometown, suffer from steep population declines, and are especially known for their critical lack of Korean Chinese “brides.” This is because many Korean Chinese women left Yanbian beginning in the early 1990s in the wake of the *Korean Wind*, going to marry to Korean men, or working for Korean companies in need of cheap Korean Chinese workers who spoke both Korean and Chinese. A growing shortage of Korean Chinese women is popularly blamed for the low rate of Korean Chinese reproduction. It is also condemned as a moral crisis because Korean Chinese women have left in pursuit of money instead of maintaining a family life back home (Noh 2011). In the midst of moral critiques targeting Korean Chinese women, female North Korean defectors, arriving as a result of food crises suffered continually by North Korea since the mid-1990s, have gradually filled the vacancies that Korean Chinese women left behind. Many women who

fled from North Korea settled in Yanbian border towns and entered informal (common law marriage) marriages with Korean Chinese (and sometimes Han Chinese) men.

Whenever I went to border towns, I heard about stories of North Korean brides who had crossed the Tumen River. And yet their whereabouts and identities seemed to be considered secrets that should not be openly spoken because the brides could be deported at any time if they were exposed. Moreover, the children born to relationships between (Korean) Chinese and North Koreans could not be registered in the Chinese household system since they were born to mothers without any official legal status in China. Due to these legal complexities and security concerns, the brides' lives remain concealed and unspoken, although the impact of these "North Korean ladies" remains obvious and distinctive in these border towns. North Korean women seemed to live well-mingled with Korean Chinese and Han Chinese in these towns, and their neighbors tried their best to protect them.

Mr. Choi's brother-in-law (his wife's younger brother) was in the same boat as other aging male Korean Chinese farmer who had been unable to marry—he ended up in a common law marriage with a North Korean woman who had crossed the Tumen River. Like other cases, their marriages were not officially recognized and thus, the twins born to the couple could not be registered either. In order to help the unregistered couple and the newborn twins, Mr. Choi and his wife have registered the twins to their own household, as if they were the real parents.

The story showed more complexity as the North Korean bride eventually moved on to South Korea, claiming refugee status and settling there. After three years of ups and downs, she finally attained South Korean citizenship, and invited her Korean Chinese

husband (Mr. Choi's brother-in-law) to join her. When he arrived in Korea, , however, he found out that his North Korean bride was having an affair with another Korean Chinese man. Mr. Choi said that she has cut off contact with his brother-in-law, and there has been no more news from her. Meanwhile, the brother-in-law wants to stay in South Korea because he cannot support the twins by himself in China if he returned. The children have no doubt that Mr. and Mrs. Choi are their parents. "Whenever I see the twins, my heart is broken," Mr. Choi said, with tears in his eyes. "I am worried about whether we can raise them properly—as if we were their real parents."

This story seemed incongruous in the midst of so much rosy talk about Yanbian's thriving economy and the Chinese rise to global power. It felt especially outlandish being told after all the bragging from the writers about going to Korea on a government-funded trip for fun, not for hard labor. At the same time, the story exemplifies the peculiar border location of Yanbian, where multi-overlapped crossings have taken place. Han Chinese have been coming to Yanbian in pursuit of new economic opportunities generated by the remittances from Korea. They have rapidly filled the formerly "pure" Korean Chinese farming towns, taking over rice fields that Korean Chinese had left behind. North Koreans have been secretively crossing the River and settling in Yanbian (and sometimes going beyond Yanbian), because of the relative affluence and geographical adjacency of Yanbian—before eventually going to South Korea as refugees. South Koreans and other international agents have taken advantage of the border location of Yanbian as a connecting node to North Korea for economic and political reasons. Yanbian has become a passage channeling people, goods, and money, both despite and because of the marginal location of the ethnic borderland. Yanbian is in flux and transition. People continuously *leave and live*.

Capturing the critical transition of the Korean Chinese transnational migration in conjunction with the global economic crisis, my dissertation has examined the formation of *mobile ethnicity* with an ethnographic focus on the theme of the Korean Wind as it emerged at the intersection of post-Cold War and post-socialist cultures. I have especially attempted to situate the Korean Wind as a unique product of the economic reform and open economy (*gaigekafang*) that both Korean Chinese and Han Chinese have experienced across and beyond the region of Yanbian. Through the lens of kinship, development, money, love, bodies, and time, I have analyzed the new affect and materiality, belonging and dwelling, hope and frustration of *mobile ethnicity*, in two respects. On the one hand, I have traced the reconstituted subjectivity of Korean Chinese as a particular ethnic working class in a transnational setting. On the other hand, I have highlighted the re-characterized ethnic space of Yanbian as a channel that myriad agents have traversed. This dissertation, which captures two competing dreams, the Korean dream and Chinese dream, has argued that Korean Chinese have chosen mobility as a way of dealing with the contingencies of contemporary economic reform. But their way of working for a better future has created unexpected vulnerabilities, sealing them into a circuit of migration as a transnational ethnic working class.

Mobile Ethnicity aims to contribute to a new understanding of *mobility* and *ethnicity* in three respects. First, this study shows the critical role of remittances (along with the *Korean Wind*) in relocating population (both pulling them into spaces and pulling them out), and creating the intersection of internal migration and transnational migration, thereby reshaping the spatial characteristics of the region. Differentiated mobility (Massey 1994) by ethnicity—

under the influence of the *Korean Wind*, an ethnic-specific fashion of mobility—has enabled ethnic groups to develop different ranges and routes of mobility and, consequently, different life choices. However, mobility also enables increased interconnection and mutual dependency between ethnic groups (chapter 2). Although the *Korean Wind* has mostly deeply influenced the scale and scope of Korean Chinese mobility, Han Chinese do not remain unaffected by it. They never tried to migrate to Korea, but have hardly been immobile—they have also moved in response to the influx of Korean money and the vacancies left behind by Korean Chinese. This growing ethnic interdependency can help us situate the *Korean Wind* as a transnational economic drive to reconfigure the ethnic and urban landscape across and beyond Yanbian—overcoming the notion that the *Korean Wind* affects only Korean Chinese migration.

Second, I have elaborated on the ambiguous role of mobility in tandem with the flow of remittances; mobility is most often thought to generate economic betterment, but it can also aggravate economic vulnerability. Instead of accepting the idea of a solidified nexus between migration and development (Glick Shiller 2010; Messy and Parado 1998; Wise and Covarrubias 2010), I have insisted that the connection is more fragile than is usually appreciated, and emphasized how the flow of remittances is volatile and fluctuates with global economic and political circumstances. Although the city of Yanji symbolizes rapid urbanization and economic development, in reality, its remittance-dependent economy is vulnerable to factors such as currency rate and overall economic conditions, rather than reliant solely on individuals' work ethic or strength of purpose. On a personal level, remittance is commonly believed to be a critical source of money for households, an indispensable way to get ahead, to secure a better future. And yet, as Mr. Ho's story powerfully demonstrated, "where love goes, money goes" (chapter 3): remittances are an unstable and unpredictable

currency because they depend on long-term, long-distance, intimate relationships. My ethnographic analysis of remittance—on the macro and micro scale—offers an insight into its special nature as not only gift or realization of familial duty, but also as fluctuating currency requiring careful management and submission to the peculiar temporality of long waits and unknown futures.

Third, my dissertation hinges on transnational temporality as a major component of subjectivity and spatiality. Recent anthropology tends to see mobility as normative and attachment to place as exceptional (Salazar & Smart 2011)—and yet, Korean Chinese migration shows that the bifurcation between mobility and immobility, emplacement and displacement, living and leaving is not always clear-cut. These two seemingly contradictory modes of being reinforce the liminal condition of many Korean Chinese livelihoods and households, as they travel between two worlds and live in “divided homes” (Zavella 2012). Korean Chinese liminality is especially exacerbated by Korean visa regulations, which force the migrants into a “split life” under a rhythm of multiple temporalities: working and making money in Korea, resting and spending in Yanbian (chapter 4). The transnational temporality ends up weaving two different worlds into a common everyday life, and requiring that bodies switch easily between two different modes of time. This ethnography of a particular Korean Chinese mobility—which attempts to respond to the unpredictability of the economy while being constrained by visa regulations, remittance flows, and bodily capacity—helps us understand time as a governmental force in making and unmaking subjects and space.

In conclusion, my dissertation has illuminated the ripple effects of the *Korean Wind* as Korean Chinese have discovered, promoted, and deployed their ethnic currency in the transnational labor market. I have also brought to light the articulation of “Yanbian socialism”

with the *Korean Wind* from the long-forbidden capitalist homeland. The Korean Chinese have made a rigorous effort to get reconnected to Korea through peculiar methods of kinship-making and/or faking. In particular, the faking of “kinship” challenges the very concept of kinship: it does not result in empathy and sociality, but instead functions merely as a ticket to Korea, and quickly becomes a pricy commodity transacted in the migration market. In the midst of their reconnection, however, Korean Chinese have also practiced vigilance, maintaining their political faith in China alongside their cultural and economic links to Korea. My work aims to weave together an account of the particular structure of feeling that Korean Chinese have shaped as they are caught between confusion and hesitation, contention and contradiction, economic desperation and political caution. I capture their constant adjustments and revisions as a major principle in the formation of *mobile ethnicity*, alongside actual, material changes and movements across borders.

Let me go back to the bus scene with which I opened my dissertation, two Korean Chinese women lamenting that everybody was gone with the Korean Wind. After the long journey of this dissertation, however, we come to realize that Yanbian, a parochial ethnic borderland, has not simply been vacated by leaving Korean Chinese, but is instead being constantly re-characterized through the reproduction of interrelations and the possibility of the existence of multiplicity (Massey 2005). That is to say, Yanbian is not a place rooted in authentic Korean identity, but an “event” (Cresswell 2004) in which diverse kinds of capital and ethnic populations intersect with the global economy. In the borderland in flux and transition, a *mobile ethnicity* is never *gone with the Wind*; rather, it is constantly on the move, tacking back and forth, even generating new breezes and gusts of its own. This flexibility and

adaptability might in the end be the only thing that is truly “one hundred percent Korean Chinese.”

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